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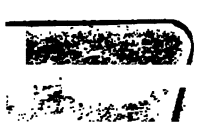

THE

WORKS

OF

LAURENCE STERNE, A. M.

IN

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THE

SERMONS

OF

MR. YORICK.

PREFACE.

THE sermon which gave rise to the publication of these, having been offered to the world as a sermon of Yorick's, I hope the most serious reader will find nothing to offend him, in my continuing these volumes under the same title. Lest it should be otherwise, I have added a second title page, with the real name of the author:—The first will serve the bookseller's purpose, as Yorick's name is possibly of the two the more known; and the second will ease the minds of those who see a jest, and the danger which lurks under it, where no jest was meant.

I suppose it is needless to inform the public, that the reason for printing these sermons, arises altogether from the favorable reception which the sermon given as a sample of them in TRISTRAM SHANDY met with from the world.—That sermon was printed by itself some years ago, but could find neither purchasers nor readers; so that I apprehended little hazard from a promise I made upon its republication, "That if the sermon was liked, these should be also at the world's service;" which, to be as good as my word, they are here; and I pray GOD, they may do it the service I wish. I have little to say in the

behalf, except this, that not one of them was composed with any thoughts of being printed;——they have been hastily written and carry the marks of it along with them.——This may be no recommendation;—I mean it however as such: For, as the sermons turn chiefly upon philanthropy, and those kindred virtues to it, upon which hang all the law and the prophets, I trust they will be no less felt, or worse received, for the evidence they bear, of proceeding more from the heart than the head. I have nothing to add, but that the reader, upon old and beaten subjects, must not look for many new thoughts—it is well if he has new language: In three or four passages, where he has neither the one nor the other, I have quoted the author I made free with.—There are some other passages, where I suspect I may have taken the same liberty; but it is only suspicion, for I do not remember it is so, otherwise I should have restored them to their proper owners; so that I put it in here, more as a general saying, than from a consciousness of having much to answer for upon that score. In this, however, and every thing else which I offer, or shall offer to the world, I rest, with a heart much at ease, upon the protection of the humane and candid, from whom I *have received* many favors, for which I *beg leave* to return them thanks—thanks.

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Adolphus Dana.

SERMON I.

Inquiry after Happineſs.

PSALM IV. 5, 6.

There be many that say, who will show us any good? ——Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.

THE great pursuit of man is after happines: It is the first and strongest desire of his nature:—In every stage of his life, he searches for it, as for hid treasure;—courts it under a thousand different shapes;——and, tho' perpetually disappointed—still persists—runs after, and inquires for it afresh—asks every passenger who comes in his way, *Who will show him any good?*—who will assist him in the attainment of it, or direct him to the discovery of this great end of all his wishes?

He is told by one, to search for it amongst the more gay and youthful pleasures of life, in scenes of mirth and sprightliness, where happiness ever presides, and is ever to be known by the joy and laughter which he will see at once painted in her looks.

A second, with a graver aspect, points out to the costly dwellings which pride and extravagance have erected:—Tells the inquirer, that the object he is in search of inhabits there; that happiness lives only in company with the great, in the midst of much pomp and outward state:—That he will easily find her out by the coat of many colors she

has on, and the great luxury and expense of equipage and furniture, with which she always sits surrounded.

The miser blesses GOD!——wonders how any one would mislead, and wilfully put him upon so wrong a scent—convinces him that happiness and extravagance never inhabited under the same roof;——that if he would not be disappointed in his search, he must look into the plain and thrifty dwelling of the prudent man, who knows and understands the worth of money, and cautiously lays it up against an evil hour: That it is not the prostitution of wealth upon the passions, or the parting with it at all, that constitutes happiness,——but that it is the keeping together, and the HAVING and HOLDING it fast to him, and his heirs for ever, which are the chief attributes that form this great idol of human worship, to which so much incense is offered up every day.

The epicure, tho' he easily rectifies so gross a mistake, yet at the same time he plunges him, if possible, into a greater; for hearing the object of his pursuit to be happiness, and knowing of no other happiness than what is seated immediately in the senses, he sends the inquirer there;—tells him, it is in vain to search elsewhere for it, than where Nature herself has placed it——in the indulgence and gratification of the appetites, which are given us for that end: And, in a word,—if he will not take his opinion in the matter—he may trust the word of a much wiser man, who has assured us—that there is nothing better in this world, than that a man should eat and drink, and rejoice in his works, and make his soul enjoy good in his labor, for that is his portion.

To rescue him from this brutal experiment, Ambition takes him by the hand, and carries him into the world,—shows him all the kingdoms of the earth, and the glory of them,—points out the

many ways of advancing his fortune, and raising himself to honor,——lays before his eyes all the charms and bewitching temptations of power—and asks if there can be any happiness in this world like that of being caressed, courted, flattered and followed.

To close all, the philosopher meets him bustling in the full career of this pursuit—stops him—tells him, if he is in search of happiness, he is far gone out of his way———

That this deity has long been banished from noise and tumults, where there was no rest found for her, and was fled into solitude, far from all commerce of the world; and, in a word, if he would find her, he must leave this busy and intriguing scene, and go back to that peaceful scene of retirement and books, from which he at first set out.

In this circle too often does man run; tries all experiments, and generally sets down weary and dissatisfied with them all at last—in utter despair of ever accomplishing what he wants—nor knowing what to trust to, after so many disappointments, or where to lay the fault; whether in the incapacity of his own nature, or the insufficiency of the enjoyments themselves.

In this uncertain and perplexed state——without knowledge which way to turn, or where to betake ourselves for refuge—so often abused and deceived by the many who pretend thus to show us any good—Lord! says the psalmist, lift up the light of thy countenance upon us. Send us some rays of thy grace and heavenly wisdom, in this benighted search after happiness, to direct us safely to it. O God! let us not wander for ever without a guide in this dark region, in endless pursuit of our mistaken good; but enlighten our eyes, that we sleep not in death—open to them the *comforts of thy holy* word and religion—lift

up the light of thy countenance upon us—and make us know the joy and satisfaction of living in the true faith and fear of Thee, which only can carry us to this heaven of rest where we would be —that sure heaven, where true joys are to be found, which will at length not only answer all our expectations—but satisfy the most unbounded of our wishes, for ever and ever.

The words thus opened, naturally reduce the remaining part of the discourse under two heads —The first part of the verse—"there be many "that say, who will show us any good?"—To make some reflections upon the insufficiency of most of our enjoyments towards the attainment of happiness, upon some of the most received plans on which it is generally sought.

The examination of which will lead us up to the source, and true secret of all happiness, suggested to us in the latter part of the verse———"LORD! "lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon "us."—That there can be no real happiness without religion and virtue, and the assistance of God's grace and holy spirit to direct our lives in the true pursuit of it.

Let us inquire into the disappointments of human happiness, on some of the most received plans on which it is generally sought for and expected, by the bulk of mankind.

There is hardly any subject more exhausted, or which, at one time or other, has afforded more matter for argument and declamation, than this one, of the insufficiency of our enjoyments. Scarce a reformed sensualist, from Solomon down to our own days, who has not, in some fits of repentance or disappointment, uttered some sharp reflection upon the emptiness of human pleasure, and of the vanity of vanities which discovers itself in all the pursuits of mortal man.—But the mischief has been, *that*, tho' so many good things have been

said, they have generally had the fate to be considered, either as the overflowings of disgust from sated appetites, which could no longer relish the pleasures of life, or as the declamatory opinions of recluse and splenetic men, who had never tasted them at all, and consequently were thought no judges of the matter. So that it is no great wonder, if the greatest part of such reflections, however just in themselves, and founded on truth, and a knowledge of the world, are found to leave little impression, where the imagination was already heated with great expectations of future happiness; and that the best lectures that have been read upon the vanity of the world, so seldom stop a man in the pursuit of the object of his desire, or give him half the conviction that the possession of it will, and what the experience of his own life, or a careful observation upon the life of others, do at length generally confirm to us all.

Let us endeavor, then, to try the cause upon this issue; and, instead of recurring to the common arguments, or taking any one's word in the case, let us trust to matter of fact; and if, upon inquiry, it appear, that the actions of mankind are not to be accounted for upon any other principle, but this, of the insufficiency of our enjoyments, it will go farther towards the establishment of the truth of this part of the discourse, than a thousand speculative arguments which might be offered upon the occasion.

Now, if we take a survey of the life of man, from the time he is come to reason, to the latest decline of it in old age—we shall find him engaged, and generally hurried on in such a succession of different pursuits, and different opinions of things, thro' the different stages of his life——as will admit of no explication but this, that he finds no rest for the sole of his foot, on any of the plans where he has been led to expect it.

The moment he is got loose from tutors and governors, and is left to judge for himself, and pursue this scheme his own way———his first thoughts are generally full of the mighty happiness which he is going to enter upon, from the free enjoyment of the pleasures in which he sees others of his age and fortune engaged.

In consequence of this——take notice, how his imagination is caught by every glittering appearance that flatters this expectation——observe what impressions are made upon his senses, by diversions, music, dress, and beauty——and how his spirits are upon the wing, flying in pursuit of them; that, you would think, he could never have enough.

Leave him to himself a few years, till the edge of appetite is worn down—you will scarce know him again. You will find him entered into engagements, and setting up for a man of business and conduct, talking of no other happiness but what centers in projects of making the most of this world, and providing for his children, and children's children after them. Examine his notions,—he will tell you, that the gayer pleasures of youth, are fit only for those who know not how to dispose of themselves and time to better advantage: That, however fair and promising they might appear to a man unpractised in them—they were no better than a life of folly and impertinence; and, so far from answering your expectation of happiness, it was well if you escaped without pain:—That in every experiment he had tried, he had found more bitter than sweet; and for the little pleasure one could snatch—it too often left a terrible sting behind it: Besides, did the balance lie on the other side, he would tell you, there could be no true satisfaction, where a life runs on in so giddy a circle, out of which a wise man should extricate himself as soon as he can, that he may begin to look forwards:—That it becomes a

man of character and consequence to lay aside childish things, to take care of his interests, to establish the fortune of his family, and place it out of want and dependence: And, in a word, if there is such a thing as happiness upon earth, it must consist in the accomplishment of this; and, for his own part, if GOD should prosper his endeavors, so as to be worth such a sum, or to be able to bring such a point to bear—he shall be one of the happiest of the sons of men. In full assurance of this, on he drudges—plots——contrives—rises early—late takes rest, and eats the bread of carefulness; till at length, by hard labor and perseverance, he has reached, if not outgone, the object he had first in view.—When he has got thus far—if he is a plain and sincere man, he will make no scruple to acknowledge truly, what alteration he has found in himself.:—If you ask him, he will tell you, that his imagination painted something before his eyes, the reality of which he has not yet attained to: That with all the accumulation of his wealth, he neither lives the merrier, sleeps the sounder, or has less care and anxiety upon his spirits, than at the first setting out.

Perhaps, you will say, some dignity, honor, or title, only is wanting—Oh! could I accomplish that, as there would be nothing left then for me to wish, good GOD! how happy should I be!—It is still the same;—the dignity or title—tho' they crown his head with honor——add not one cubit to his happiness. Upon summing up the account, all, all is found to be seated merely in the imagination.—The faster he has pursued, the faster the phantom fled before him; and, to use the Satyrist's comparison of the chariot-wheels—haste as they will, they must forever keep the same distance.

But what? tho' I have been thus far disappointed in my expectations of happiness from the possession of riches—"Let me try, whether I shall

" not meet with it, in the spending and fashiona-
" ble enjoyment of them."

Behold ! I will get me down, and make me great works, and build me houses, and plant me vineyards, and make me gardens and pools of water. And I will get me servants and maidens ; and whatsoever my eyes desire, I will not keep from them.

In prosecution of this—he drops all painful pursuits—withdraws himself from the busy part of the world——realizes——pulls down—builds up again.——Buys statues, pictures——plants—and plucks up by the roots—levels mountains, and fills up vallies—turns rivers into dry ground, and dry ground into rivers—Says unto this man, Go, and he goeth ; and unto another, Do this, and he doeth it :—And whatsoever his soul lusteth after of this kind, he withholds not from it. When every thing is thus planned by himself, and executed according to his wish and direction, surely he is arrived to the accomplishment of his wishes, and has got to the summit of all human happiness ! Let the most fortunate adventurers in this way answer the question for him, and say—how often it rises higher than a bare and simple amusement—and well, if you can compound for that—since 'tis often purchased at so high a price, and so soured by a mixture of other incidental vexations, as to become too often a work of repentance, which in the end will extort the same sorrowful confession from him, which it did from Solomon in the like case—Lo ! I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labor that I had labored to do—and behold all was vanity and vexation of spirit—and there was no profit to me under the sun.

To inflame this account the more—it will be no miracle, if, upon casting it up, he has gone farther lengths than he first intended—run into expenses *which have* entangled his fortune, and brought

himself into such difficulties as to make way for the last experiment he can try—and that is, to turn a miser, with no happiness in view but what is to rise out of the little designs of a sordid mind, set upon saving and scraping up all he has injudiciously spent.

In this last stage—behold him a poor trembling wretch, shut up from all mankind—sinking into utter contempt; spending careful days and sleepless nights, in pursuit of what a narrow and contracted heart can never enjoy: And let us here leave him to the conviction he will one day find—that there is no end of his labor—that his eyes will never be satisfied with riches, or will say—For whom do I labor and bereave myself of rest?—This is also a sore travel.

I believe this is no uncommon picture of the disappointments of human life—and the manner our pleasures and enjoyments slip from under us in every stage of our life. And tho' I would not be thought, by it, as if I was denying the reality of pleasures, or disputing the being of them, any more than one would the reality of pain—yet I must observe on this head, that there is a plain distinction to be made betwixt pleasure and happiness. For, tho' there can be no happiness without pleasure——yet the converse of the proposition will not hold true—We are so made, that from the common gratifications of our appetites, and the impressions of a thousand objects, we snatch the one, like a transient gleam, without being suffered to taste the other, and enjoy that perpetual sun-shine, and fair weather which constantly attend it. This, I contend, is only to be found in religion—in the consciousness of virtue—and the sure and certain hopes of a better life, which brightens all our prospects, and leaves no room to dread disappointments—because the ex-

pectation of it is built upon a rock, whose foundations are as deep as those of heaven and hell.

And tho' in our pilgrimage thro' this world—some of us may be so fortunate as to meet with some clear fountains by the way, that may cool for a few moments, the heat of this great thirst of happiness—yet our SAVIOUR, who knew the world, tho' he enjoyed but little of it, tells us, that whosoever drinketh of this water, will thirst again:—And we all find, by experience, it is so, and by reason, that it always must be so.

I conclude with a short observation upon Solomon's evidence in this case.

Never did the busy brain of a lean and hectic chymist search for the philosopher's stone with more pains and ardor than this great man did after happiness——He was one of the wisest inquirers into Nature—had tried all her powers and capacities, and, after a thousand vain speculations and vile experiments, he affirmed, at length, it lay hid in no one thing he had tried—like the chymic's projections, all had ended in smoke, or, what was worse, in vanity and vexation of spirit:—The conclusion of the whole matter was this—that he advises every man who would be happy, to fear God, and keep his commandments.

SERMON II.

The House of Feasting, and the House of Mourning, described.

ECCLES. VII. 2, 3.

It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to the house of feasting.——

THAT I deny—But let us hear the wise man's reasoning upon it—*for that* is *the end of all men, and the living* will *lay it to* his *heart: Sorrow is better than laughter*———for a crack'd-brain'd order of Carthusian monks, I grant, but not for men of the world—For what purpose do you imagine, has GOD made us? for the social sweets of the well-watered vallies where he has planted us, or for the dry and dismal deserts of a *Sierra Morena*?—Are the sad accidents of life, and the uncheary hours, which perpetually overtake us, are they not enough, but we must sally forth in quest of them—belie our own hearts, and say, as your text would have us, that they are better than those of joy? Did the best of beings send us into the world for this end——to go weeping thro' it,—— to vex and shorten a life, short and vexatious enough already? Do you think, my good preacher, that he who is infinitely happy, can envy us of our enjoyments? or, that a being, so infinitely kind, would grudge a mournful traveller the short rest and refreshments necessary to support his spirits thro' the stages of a weary pilgrimage? Or that he would call him to a severe reckoning, because in his way he had hastily snatched at some little fugacious pleasures, merely to sweeten his uneasy journey of life, and reconcile him to the ruggedness of the road, and the many hard jostling he is sure to meet with? Consider, I beseech you,

what provision and accommodation, the Author of our being has prepared for us, that we might not go on our way sorrowing—how many caravanseras of rest—what powers and faculties he has given us for taking it—what apt objects he has placed in our way to entertain us; some of which he has made so fair, so exquisitely fitted for this end, that they have power over us, for a time, to charm away the sense of pain, to chear up the dejected heart under poverty and sickness, and make it go and remember its miseries no more.

I will not contend, at present, against this rhetoric; I would choose rather, for a moment, to go on with the allegory, and say we are travellers, and in the most affecting sense of that idea, that, like travellers, tho' upon business of the last and nearest concern to us, we may surely be allowed to amuse ourselves with the natural or artificial beauties of the country we are passing thro' without reproach of forgetting the main errand we are sent upon; and if we can so order it, as not to be led out of the way, by the variety of prospects, edifices, and ruins, which solicit us, it would be a nonsensical piece of saint-errantry to shut our eyes.

But let us not lose sight of the argument, in pursuit of the similie.

Let us remember, various as our excursions are——that we have still our set faces towards Jerusalem—that we have a place of rest and happiness, towards which we hasten, and that the way to get there, is not so much to please our hearts, as to improve them in virtue; that mirth and feasting are usually no friends to achievements of this kind—but that a season of affliction is in some sort a season of piety——not only because our sufferings are apt to put us in mind of our sins, but that by the check and interruption which they give to our pursuits, they allow us, what the hurry and bustle of the world too often deny us,—and

that is, a little time for reflection, which is all that most of us want, to make us wiser and better men;—that at certain times it is so necessary a man's mind should be turned towards itself, that, rather than want occasions, he had better purchase them at the expense of his present happiness—he had better, as the text expresses it, *go to the house of mourning*, where he will meet with something to subdue his passions, than to the house of feasting, where the joy and gaiety of the place is likely to excite them:——That whereas the entertainments and caresses of the one place, expose his heart, and lay it open to temptations—the sorrows of the other defend it, and as naturally shut them from it. So strange and unaccountable a creature is man! he is so framed, that he cannot but pursue happiness—and yet, unless he is made sometimes miserable, how apt is he to mistake the way which can only lead him to the accomplishment of his own wishes!

This is the full force of the wise man's declaration. But, to do farther justice to his words, I will endeavor to bring the subject still nearer—For which purpose, it will be necessary to stop here, and take a transient view of the two places here referred to,——the house of mourning, and the house of feasting.——Give me leave, therefore, I beseech you, to recal both of them for a moment to your imaginations, that from thence I may appeal to your hearts, how faithfully, and upon what grounds, the effects and natural operations of each upon our minds are intimated in the text.

And first, let us look into the house of feasting.

And here, to be as fair and candid as possible in the description of this, we will not take it from the worst originals, such as are opened merely for the sale of virtue, and so calculated for the end, that the disguise each is under, not only gives

power safely to drive on the bargain, but safely to carry it into execution too.

This we will not suppose to be the case—nor let us even imagine the house of feasting to be such a scene of intemperance and excess, as the house of feasting does often exhibit;—but let us take it from one as little exceptionable as we can —where there is, or at least appears nothing really criminal—but where every thing seems to be kept within the visible bounds of moderation and sobriety.

Imagine then, such a house of feasting, where, either by consent or invitation, a number of each sex is drawn together, for no other purpose but the enjoyment and mutual entertainment of each other, which we will suppose shall arise from no other pleasures but what custom authorizes, and religion does not absolutely forbid.

Before we enter—let us examine, what must be the sentiments of each individual previous to his arrival; and we shall find, that however they may differ from one another in tempers and opinions, that every one seems to agree in this,—That as he is going to a house dedicated to joy and mirth, it was fit he should divest himself of whatever was likely to contradict that intention, or be inconsistent with it—That, for this purpose, he had left his care—his serious thoughts,—and his moral reflections behind him, and was come forth from home with only such dispositions and gaiety of heart as suited the occasion, and promoted the intended mirth and jollity of the place.—With this preparation of mind, which is as little as can be supposed, since it will amount to no more than a desire in each to render himself an acceptable guest,—let us conceive them entering into the house of feasting, with hearts set loose from grave restraints, and open to the expectations of receiving pleasure. It is not necessary, as I pre-

mised to bring intemperance into this scene—or to suppose such an excess in the gratification of the appetites, as shall ferment the blood, and set the desires in a flame:—Let us admit no more of it, therefore, than will gently stir them, and fit them for the impressions which so benevolent a commerce will naturally excite. In this disposition, thus wrought upon before-hand, and already improved to this purpose,—take notice how mechanically the thoughts and spirits rise.....how soon, and insensibly, they are got above the pitch and first bounds which coolor hours would have marked,

When the gay and smiling aspect of things has begun to leave the passages to a man's heart thus thoughtlessly unguarded—when kind and caressing looks of every object without, that can flatter his senses, have conspired with the enemy within, to betray him, and put him off his defence—when music, likewise, has lent her aid, and tried her power upon his passions—when the voice of singing-men, and the voice of singing-women, with the sound of the viol and the lute, have broke in upon his soul, and, in some tender notes, have touched the secret springs of rapture—That moment let us dissect and look into his heart—See how vain! how weak! how empty a thing it is! Look thro' its several recesses—those pure mansions formed for the reception of innocence and virtue—Sad spectacle!—Behold those fair inhabitants now dispossessed—turned out of their sacred dwellings, to make room—for what?—at the best, for levity and indiscretion—perhaps for folly—it may be, for more impure guests, which possibly, in so general a riot of the mind and senses, may take occasion to enter unsuspected at the same time.

In a scene and disposition thus described—can the most cautious say—Thus far shall my desires

go——and no farther? or, will the coolest and most circumspect say, when pleasure has taken full possession of his heart, that no thought nor purpose shall arise there, which he would have concealed?—In those loose and unguarded moments, the imagination is not always at command—in spite of reason and reflection, it will forcibly carry him sometimes whither he would not—like the unclean spirit, in the parent's sad description of his child's case, which took him, and oft-times cast him into the fire to destroy him; and, wheresoever it taketh him, it teareth him, and hardly departed from him.

But this, you will say, is the worst account of what the mind may suffer here.

Why may we not make more favorable suppositions?—that numbers, by exercise and custom to such encounters, learn gradually to despise and triumph over them;——that the minds of many are not so susceptible of warm impressions, or so badly fortified against them, that pleasure should easily corrupt or soften them;——that it would be hard to suppose, of the great multitudes which daily throng and press into this house of Feasting, but that numbers come out of it again with all the innocence with which they entered;—and that, if both sexes are included in the computation, what fair examples shall we see of many, of so pure and chaste a turn of mind—that the house of Feasting with all its charms and temptations, was never able to excite a thought, or awaken an inclination, which virtue need to blush at—or which the most scrupulous conscience might not support. God forbid we should say otherwise: No doubt, numbers of all ages escape unhurt, and get off this dangerous sea without shipwreck.—Yet, are they not to be reckoned amongst the more fortunate adventurers?——and tho' one would not absolutely prohibit the attempt, or be so cynical as to con-

demn every one who tries it, since there are so many, I suppose, who cannot well do otherwise, and whose condition and situation in life unavoidably force them upon it—yet we may be allowed to describe this fair and flattering coast—we may point out the unsuspecting dangers of it, and warn the unwary passenger where they lie.—We may show him what hazards his youth and inexperience will run, how little he can gain by the venture, and how much wiser and better it would be (as is implied in the text) to seek occasions rather to improve his little stock of virtue, than incautiously expose it to so unequal a chance, where the best he can hope is to return safe with what treasure he carried out—but where, probably, he may be so unfortunate, as to lose it all—be lost himself, and undone for ever.

Thus much for the house of Feasting, which, by the way, tho' generally open at other times of the year throughout the world, is supposed, in Christian countries, now every where to be universally shut up.—And, in truth, I have been more full in my cautions against it, not only as reason requires,—but in reverence to this season,* wherein our church exacts a more particular forbearance and self-denial in this point, and thereby adds to the restraints upon pleasure and entertainments which this representation of things has suggested against them already.

Here, then, let us turn aside from this gay scene; and suffer me to take you with me, for a moment, to one much fitter for your meditation. Let us go into the house of Mourning, made so by such afflictions as have been brought in, merely by the common cross-accidents and disasters to which our condition is exposed,——where, per-

* *Preached in Lent.*

haps, the aged parents sit broken-hearted, pierced to their souls with the folly and indiscretion of a thankless child—the child of their prayers, in whom all their hopes and expectations centered.—Perhaps a more affecting scene—a virtuous family lying pinched with want, where the unfortunate support of it, having long struggled with a train of misfortunes, and bravely fought up against them—is now piteously borne down at the last—overwhelmed with a cruel blow, which no forecast or frugality could have prevented.—O GOD! look upon his afflictions—Behold him distracted with many sorrows, surrounded with tender pledges of his love, and the partner of his cares—without bread to give them!—unable from the remembrance of better days, to dig;—to beg, ashamed.

When we enter into the house of Mourning such as this—it is impossible to insult the unfortunate even with an improper look—Under what ever levity and dissipation of heart such objects catch our eyes,—they catch likewise our attentions,—collect and call home our scattered thoughts and exercise them with wisdom. A transient scene of distress, such as is here sketched, how soon does it furnish materials to set the mind at work? how necessarily does it engage it to the consideration of the miseries and misfortunes, the dangers and calamities to which the life of man is subject! By holding up such a glass before it, it forces the mind to see and reflect upon the vanity—the perishing condition, and uncertain tenure, of every thing in this world. From reflections of this serious cast, how insensibly do the thoughts carry us farther?——and from considering what we are—what kind of world we live in—and what evils befal us in it—how naturally do they set us to look forwards at what possibly we shall be?—for what kind of world we are intended—what *evils may* befal us there—and what provision we

should make against them here, whilst we have time and opportunity.

If these lessons are so inseparable from the house of Mourning here supposed—we shall find it a still more instructive school of wisdom, when we take a view of the place in that more affecting light to which the wise man seems to confine it in the text; in which, by the house of Mourning, I believe, he means that particular scene of sorrow where there is lamentation and mourning for the dead.

Turn in hither, I beseech you, for a moment. Behold a dead man ready to be carried out, the only son of his mother, and she a widow. Perhaps a more affecting spectacle—a kind and indulgent father of a numerous family, lies breathless—snatched away in the strength of his age—torn in an evil hour from his children and the bosom of a disconsolate wife.

Behold much people of the city gathered together to mix their tears, with settled sorrow in their looks, going heavily along to the house of Mourning, to perform that last melancholy office, which, when the debt of nature is paid, we are called upon to pay each other.

If the sad occasion which leads him there, has not done it already, take notice, to what a serious and devout frame of mind every man is reduced the moment he enters this gate of affliction. The busy and fluttering spirits, which, in the house of mirth, were wont to transport him from one diverting object to another—see how they are fallen! how peaceably they are laid!—In this gloomy mansion, full of shades and uncomfortable damps to seize the soul—see, the light and easy heart, which never knew what it was to think before, how pensive it is now, how soft, how susceptible, how full of religious impressions, how deeply it is smitten *with a sense*, and with a love of virtue.

Could we, in this crisis, whilst this empire of Reason and Religion lasts, and the heart is thus exercised with wisdom, and busied with heavenly contemplations—could we see it naked as it is, stripped of all its passions, unspotted by the world, and regardless of its pleasures—we might then safely rest our cause upon this single evidence and appeal to the most sensual, whether Solomon has not made a just determination here, in favor of the house of Mourning?—not for its own sake, but as it is fruitful in virtue, and becomes the occasion of so much good. Without this end, sorrow, I own, has no use, but to shorten a man's days——nor can gravity, with all its studied solemnity of look and carriage, serve any end, but to make one half the world merry, and impose upon the other.

Consider what has been said, and may God of his mercy bless you. Amen.

SERMON III.

Philanthropy recommended.

LUKE X. 36, 37.

Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell amongst the thieves?...and he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him,—Go, and do thou likewise.

IN the foregoing verses of this chapter, the evangelist relates, that a certain lawyer stood up and tempted JESUS, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?....To which inquiry, our SAVIOUR, as his manner was when any ensnaring question was put to him, which he saw proceeded more from a design to entangle him, than an honest view of getting information....instead of giving a direct answer, which might afford a handle to malice, or at best serve only to gratify an impertinent humor....he immediately retorts the question upon the man who asked it, and unavoidably puts him upon the necessity of answering himself:....And as, in the present case, the particular profession of the inquirer, and his supposed general knowledge of all other branches of learning, left no room to suspect he could be ignorant of the true answer to his question, and especially of what every one knew was delivered upon that head by their great Legislator,....our SAVIOUR therefore refers him to his own memory of what he had found there in the course of his studies..... What is written in the law? how readest thou? Upon which the inquirer, reciting the general heads of our duty to GOD and man, as delivered in the 18th of Leviticus, and the 6th of Deuteronomy,....namely....*That we should worship the Lord our God with all our hearts, and love our neighbor as*

ourselves ; our blessed SAVIOUR tells him, he had answered right, and if he followed that lesson, he could not fail of the blessing he seemed desirous to inherit.....*This do and thou shalt live.*

But he, as the context tells us, willing to justify himself....willing possibly to gain more credit in the conference, or hoping, perhaps, to hear such a partial and narrow definition of the word *neighbor*, as would suit his own principles, and justify some particular oppressions of his own, or those of which his whole order lay under an accusation....says unto JESUS, in the 29th verse..... *And who is my neighbor ?* Tho' the demand, at first sight, may seem utterly trifling, yet was it far from being so in fact. For according as you understood the term in a more or a less restrained sense....it produced many necessary variations in the duties you owed from that relation. Our blessed SAVIOUR, to rectify any partial and pernicious mistake in this matter, and place, at once, this duty of the love of our neighbor upon its true bottom of philanthropy and universal kindness, makes answer to the proposed question, not by any far-fetched refinements from the schools of the Rabbies, which might have sooner silenced than convinced the man....but by a direct appeal to human nature, in an instance he relates of a man falling among thieves, left in the greatest distress imaginable, till by chance a Samaritan, an utter stranger, coming where he was, by an act of great goodness and compassion, not only relieved him at present, but took him under his protection, and generously provided for his future safety.

On the close of which engaging account, our SAVIOUR appeals to the man's own heart in the first verse of the text....*Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell amongst the thieves ?* and instead of drawing the inference *himself*, leaves him to decide in favor of so noble

a principle, so evidently founded in mercy....The lawyer, struck with the truth and justice of the doctrine, and frankly acknowledging the force of it, our blessed SAVIOUR concludes the debate with a short admonition, that he would practise what he had approved....and go and imitate that fair example of universal benevolence which it had set before him.

In the remaining part of the discourse, I shall follow the same plan; and therefore, shall beg leave to enlarge, First, upon the story itself, with such reflections as will rise from it; and conclude, as our SAVIOUR has done, with the same exhortation to kindness and humanity which so naturally falls from it.

A certain man, says our SAVIOUR, went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his raiment, and departed, leaving him half dead.....There is something in our nature which engages us to take part in every accident to which man is subject, from what cause soever it may have happened; but in such calamities as a man has fallen into thro' mere misfortune, to be charged upon no fault or indiscretion of himself, there is something then so truly interesting, that at first sight we generally make them our own, not altogether from a reflection that they might have been, or may be so, but oftener from a certain generosity and tenderness of nature which disposes us for compassion, abstracted from all considerations of self: So that, without any observable act of the will, we suffer with the unfortunate, and feel a weight upon our spirits, we know not why, on seeing the most common instances of their distress.....But, where the spectacle is uncommonly tragical, and complicated with many circumstances of misery, the mind is then taken captive at once, and, were it inclined to it, has *no power to* make resistance, but surren-

ders itself to all the tender emotions of pity and deep concern.....So that when one considers the friendly part of our nature, without looking farther, one would think it impossible for a man to look upon misery, without finding himself, in some measure, attached to the interest of him who suffers it.....I say, one would think it impossible ;....for there are some tempers....how shall I describe them ?....formed either of such impenetrable matter, or wrought up, by habitual selfishness, to such an utter insensibility of what becomes of the fortunes of their fellow-creatures, as if they were not partakers of the same nature, or had no lot or connection at all with the species.

Of this character our SAVIOUR produces two disgraceful instances, in the behavior of a priest and a Levite, whom in this account he represents as coming to the place where the unhappy man was ;.....both passing by, without either stretching forth a hand to assist, or uttering a word to comfort him in his distress.

And, by chance, there came down a certain priest——Merciful GOD ! that a teacher of thy religion should ever want humanity—or that a man, whose head might be thought full of the one, should have a heart void of the other !....This, however, was the case before us....And tho' in theory, one would scarce suspect that the least pretence to religion, and an open disregard to so main a part of it, could ever meet together in one person.....yet, in fact, it is no fictitious character.

Look into the world—how often do you behold a sordid wretch, whose strait heart is open to no man's affliction, taking shelter behind an appearance of piety, and putting on the garb of religion, which none but the merciful and compassionate have a title to wear? Take notice with what sanctity he goes, to the end of his days, in the same *selfish track in* which he at first set out....turning

neither to the right hand nor to the left.....but plods on....pores all his life long upon the ground, as if afraid to look up, lest peradventure he should see aught which might turn him one moment out of that strait line where interest is carrying him; ....or if, by chance, he stumbles upon a hapless object of distress, which threatens such a disaster to him.....like the man here represented, devoutly passing by on the other side, as if unwilling to trust himself to the impressions of nature, or hazard the inconveniencies which pity might lead him into upon the occasion.

There is but one stroke wanting in this picture of an unmerciful man, to render the character utterly odious, and that our SAVIOUR gives it in the following instance he relates upon it.....And likewise, says he, *a Levite when he was at the place, came, and looked at him.* It was not a transient oversight, the hasty or ill-advised neglect of an unconsidering humor, with which the best disposed are sometimes overtaken, and led on beyond the point where otherwise they would have wished to stop....No !...on the contrary, it had all the aggravation of a deliberate act of insensibility, proceeding from an hard heart. When he was at the place, he came, and looked at him.....considered his misfortunes....gave time for reason and nature to have awoke.....saw the imminent danger he was in....and the pressing necessity of immediate help, which so violent a case called aloud for;....and, after all....turned aside, and unmercifully left him to all the distresses of his condition.

In all unmerciful actions, the worst of men pay this compliment, at least, to humanity, as to endeavor to wear as much of the appearance of it, as the case will well let them;.....so that in the hardest acts a man shall be guilty of, he has some motives, true or false, always ready to offer, either to *satisfy himself* or the world, and GOD

knows, too often to impose both upon the one and the other. And therefore it would be no hard matter here to give a probable guess at what passed in the Levite's mind in the present case, and show, was it necessary, by what kind of casuistry he settled the matter with his conscience as he passed by, and guarded all the passages to his heart against the inroads which pity might attempt to make upon the occasion.....But it is painful to dwell long upon this disagreeable part of the story; I therefore hasten to the concluding incident of it, which is so amiable, that one cannot easily be too copious in reflections upon it.....And behold, says our SAVIOUR, a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion on him.....and went to him....bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine....set him upon his own beast, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. I suppose it will be scarce necessary here to remind you, that the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans :.....An old religious grudge....the worst of all grudges! had wrought such a dislike between both people, that they held themselves mutually discharged, not only from all offices of friendship and kindness, but even from the most common acts of courtesy and good manners.——This operated so strongly in our SAVIOUR'S time, that the woman of Samaria seemed astonished, that he, being a Jew, should ask water of her, who was a Samaritan :——So, that, with such a prepossession, however distressful the case of the unfortunate man was, and how reasonable soever he might plead for pity from another man, there was little aid or consolation to be looked for from so unpromising a quarter..... *Alas! after I have been twice passed by, neglected by men of my own nation and religion, bound by so many ties to assist me, left here friendless and unpitied both by a priest and a Levite, men whose profession and su-*

perior advantages of knowledge could not leave them in the dark, in what manner they should discharge this debt which my condition claims.....after this.....what hopes? what expectations from a passenger, not only a stranger,.....but a Samaritan, released from all obligations to me, and, by a national dislike, inflamed by mutual ill-offices, now made my enemy, and more likely to rejoice at the evils which have fallen upon me, than to stretch forth a hand to save me from them?

It is no unnatural soliloquy to imagine: But the actions of generous and compassionate tempers baffle all little reasonings about them....True charity, in the apostle's description, as it is kind, and is not easily provoked, so it manifested this character here;....for we find, when he came where he was, and beheld his distress,....all the unfriendly passions, which at another time might have rose within him, now utterly forsook him, and fled: When he saw his misfortunes....he forgot his enmity towards the man——dropped all the prejudices which education had planted against him, and, in the room of them, all that was good and compassionate was suffered to speak in his behalf.

In benevolent natures, the impulse to pity is so sudden, that, like instruments of music, which obey the touch....the objects which are fitted to excite such impressions, work so instantaneous an effect, that you would think the will was scarce concerned, and that the mind was altogether passive in the sympathy which her own goodness has excited. The truth is,....the soul is generally, in such cases, so busily taken up, and wholly engrossed by the object of pity, that she does not attend to her own operations, or take leisure to examine the principles upon which she acts.....So that the Samaritan, tho' the moment he saw him had compassion on him, yet, sudden as the emotion is represented, you are not to imagine that it was mechanical, but that there was a settled principle of humanity

and goodness which operated within him, and influenced not only the first impulse of kindness, but the continuation of it throughout the rest of so engaging a behavior.....And because it is a pleasure to look into a good mind, and trace out, as far as one is able, what passes within it on such occasions, I shall beg leave, for a moment, to state an account of what was likely to pass in his, and in what manner so distressful a case would necessarily work upon such a disposition.

As he approached the place where the unfortunate man lay, the instant he beheld him, no doubt, some such train of reflections as this would rise in his mind. "Good God! what a spectacle of "misery do I behold....a man stripped of his rai- "ment....wounded....lying languishing before me "upon the ground, just ready to expire,....without "the comfort of a friend to support him in his last "agonies, or the prospect of an hand to close his "eyes when his pains are over. But perhaps "my concern should lessen, when I reflect on the "relations in which we stand to each other—that "he is a Jew, and I a Samaritan.—But are we not "still both men—partakers of the same nature— "and subject to the same evils?—Let me change "conditions with him for a moment, and consider, "had his lot befallen me as I journeyed in the "way, what measure I should have expected at "his hand—Should I wish, when he beheld me "wounded and half dead, that he should shut up "his bowels of compassion from me, and double "the weight of my miseries, by passing by and "leaving them unpitied?—But I am a stranger "to the man:—Be it so;—but I am no stranger "to his condition—misfortunes are of no particu- "lar tribe or nation, but belong to us all, and have "a general claim upon us, without distinction of "climate, country, or religion. Besides, tho' I "am a stranger—it is no fault of his that I do

"not know him, and therefore unequitable he "should suffer by it.—Had I known him, possibly "I should have had cause to love and pity him "the more—for aught I know, he is some one of "uncommon merit, whose life is rendered still "more precious, as the lives and happiness of "others may be involved in it: Perhaps at this "instant that he lies here forsaken, in all this "misery, a whole virtuous family is joyfully look-"ing for his return, and affectionately counting "the hours of his delay. Oh! did they know "what evil had befallen him—how would they "fly to succor him!—Let me then hasten to sup-"ply those tender offices of binding up his wounds, "and carrying him to a place of safety——or, if "that assistance comes too late, I shall comfort "him at least in his last hour—and, if I can do "nothing else,—I shall soften his misfortunes, "by dropping a tear of pity over them."

It is almost necessary to imagine the good Samaritan was influenced by some such thoughts as these, from the uncommon generosity of his behavior, which is represented by our SAVIOUR as operating like the warm zeal of a brother, mixed with the affectionate discretion and care of a parent, who was not satisfied with taking him under his protection, and supplying his present wants, but in looking forwards for him, and taking care that his wants should be supplied, when he should be gone, and no longer near to befriend him.

I think there needs no stronger argument to prove how universally and deeply the seeds of this virtue of compassion are planted in the heart of man, than in the pleasure we take in such representations of it: And, tho' some men have represented human nature in other colors, (tho' to what end I know not), that the matter of fact is so strong against them, that, from the general propensity to pity the *unfortunate*, we express that sensation

by the word humanity, as if it was inseparable from our nature. That it is not inseparable, I have allowed in the former part of this discourse, from some reproachful instances of selfish tempers, which seem to take part in nothing beyond themselves; yet I am persuaded, and affirm, it is still so great and noble a part of our nature, that a man must do great violence to himself, and suffer many a painful conflict, before he has brought himself to a different disposition.

It is observable in the foregoing account, that, when the priest came to the place where he was, he passed by on the other side.—He might have passed by, you will say, without turning aside.—No; there is a secret shame which attends every act of inhumanity, not to be conquered in the hardest natures; so that, as in other cases, so especially in this, many a man will do a cruel act, who, at the same time, would blush to look you in the face, and is forced to turn aside, before he can have a heart to execute his purpose.

Inconsistent creature that man is! who, at that instant that he does what is wrong, is not able to withhold his testimony to what is good and praiseworthy.

I have now done with the parable, which was the first part proposed to be considered in this discourse; and should proceed to the second, which so naturally falls from it, of exhorting you, as our SAVIOUR did the lawyer upon it, to go and do so likewise: But I have been so copious in my reflections upon the story itself, that I find I have insensibly incorporated into them almost all that I should have said here, in recommending so amiable an example; by which means, I have unawares, anticipated the task I proposed.—I shall therefore detain you no longer than with a single remark upon the subject in general, which is this:—It is observable in many places of scripture, that our

blessed SAVIOUR, in describing the day of judgment, does it in such a manner, as if the great inquiry, then, was to relate principally to this one virtue of compassion—and as if our final sentence, at that solemnity, was to be pronounced exactly according to the degrees of it. "I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat—thirsty, and ye gave "me drink—naked, and ye clothed me—I was "sick, and ye visited me—in prison, and ye came "unto me." Not that we are to imagine from thence, as if any other good or evil action should then be overlooked by the eye of the all-seeing Judge; but barely to intimate to us, that a charitable and benevolent disposition is so principal and ruling a part of a man's character, as to be a considerable test, by itself, of the whole frame and temper of his mind, with which all other virtues and vices respectively rise and fall, and will almost necessarily be connected.——Tell me, therefore, of a compassionate man—you represent to me a man of a thousand other good qualities—on whom I can depend—whom I may safely trust with my wife——my children, my fortune, and reputation. It is for this, as the apostle argues from the same principle—"that he will not commit adultery—"that he will not kill—that he will not steal—"that he will not bear false witness." That is, the sorrows which are stirred up in mens hearts by such trespasses, are so tenderly felt by a compassionate man, that it is not in his power, or his nature, to commit them.

So that, well might he conclude, that charity, by which he means, love to our neighbor, was the end of the commandment, and that whosoever fulfilled it, had fulfilled the law.

Now, to GOD, &c. Amen.

SERMON IV.

Self-knowledge.

2 SAMUEL XII. 7. 1st part.

And Nathan said unto David, Thou art the man.

THERE is no historical passage in scripture, which gives a more remarkable instance of the deceitfulness of the heart of man to itself, and of how little we truly know of ourselves, than this, wherein David is convicted out of his own mouth, and is led by the prophet to condemn and pronounce a severe judgment upon another, for an act of injustice which he had passed over in himself, and possibly reconciled to his own conscience. To know one's self, one would think, could be no very difficult lesson;—for who, you will say, can be truly ignorant of himself, and the true disposition of his own heart?—If a man thinks at all, he cannot be a stranger to what passes there—he must be conscious of his own thoughts and desires; he must remember his past pursuits, and the true springs and motives, which, in general, have directed the actions of his life: He may hang out false colors, and deceive the world; but how can a man deceive himself? That a man can—is evident, because he daily does so.—Scripture tells us, and gives us many historical proofs of it, besides this to which the text refers,——"That "the heart of man is treacherous to itself, and "deceitful above all things;" and experience, and every hour's commerce with the world, confirms the truth of this seeming paradox, "That "tho' man is the only creature endowed with re-"flection, and consequently, qualified to know the "most of himself,—yet, so it happens, that he "generally knows the least—and with all the

"power which GOD has given him, of turning his "eyes inward upon himself, and taking notice of "the chain of his own thoughts and desires—yet, "in fact, he is generally so inattentive, but al- "ways so partial an observer of what passes, that "he is as much, nay, often a much greater stran- "ger to his own disposition and true character, "than all the world besides."

By what means he is brought under so manifest a delusion, and how he suffers himself to be so grossly imposed upon, in a point which he is capable of knowing so much better than others, is not hard to give an account of; nor need we seek farther for it, than amongst the causes which are every day perverting his reason, and misleading him. We are deceived in judging of ourselves, just as we are in judging of other things, when our passions and inclinations are called in as counsellors; and we suffer ourselves to see and reason just so far, and no farther, than they give us leave. How hard do we find it to pass an equitable and sound judgment in a matter where our interest is deeply concerned!—And even where there is the remotest consideration of self, connected with the point before us, what a strange bias does it hang upon our minds, and how difficult is it to disengage our judgments entirely from it?—With what reluctance are we brought to think evil of a friend, whom we have long loved and esteemed? and, tho' there happen to be strong appearances against him, how apt are we to overlook, or put favorable constructions upon them, and even sometimes, when our zeal and friendship transport us, to assign the best and kindest motives for the worst and most unjustifiable parts of his conduct?

We are still worse casuists, and the deceit is proportionably stronger with a man, when he is going to judge of himself——that dearest of all parties, —*so closely connected* with him—so much and

so long beloved——of whom he has so early conceived the highest opinion and esteem, and with whose merit he has all along, no doubt, found so much reason to be contented.—It is not an easy matter to be severe, where there is such an impulse to be kind, or to efface at once all the tender impressions in favor of so old a friend, which disable us from thinking of him as he is, and seeing him in the light, may be, in which every one else sees him.

So that, however easy this knowledge of one's self may appear at first sight, it is otherwise when we come to examine—since, not only in practice, but even in speculation and theory, we find it one of the hardest and most painful lessons.—Some of the earliest instructors of mankind, no doubt, found it so too, and, for that reason, soon saw the necessity of laying such a stress upon this great precept of self-knowledge, which, for its excellent wisdom and usefulness, many of them supposed to be a divine direction,—that it came down from heaven, and comprehended the whole circle both of the knowledge and the duty of man.——And indeed, their zeal might easily be allowed in so high an encomium upon the attainment of a virtue, the want of which so often baffled their instructions, and rendered their endeavors of reforming the heart vain and useless. For, who could think of a reformation of the faults within him, who knew not where they lay, or could set about correcting, till he had first come to a sense of the defects which required it?

But this was a point always much easier recommended by public instructors, than shown how to be put in practice; and therefore, others, who equally sought the reformation of mankind, observing that this direct road which led to it was guarded on all sides by self-love, and consequently *very difficult* to open access, soon found out, that

a different and more artful course was requisite:—As they had not strength to remove this flattering passion, which stood in their way, and blocked up all the passages to the heart, they endeavored, by stratagem, to get beyond it, and, by a skilful address, if possible, to deceive it.—This gave rise to the early manner of conveying their instructions in parables, fables, and such sort of indirect applications, which, tho' they could not conquer this principle of self-love, yet often laid it asleep, or, at least, over-reached it for a few moments, till a just judgment could be procured.

The prophet Nathan seems to have been a great master in this way of address.—David had greatly displeased GOD, by two grievous sins which he had committed; and the prophet's commission was, to go and bring him to a conviction of them, and touch his heart with a sense of guilt for what he had done against the honor and life of Uriah.

The holy man knew, that was it any one's case but David's own, no man would have been so quick-sighted in discerning the nature of the injury,—more ready to have redressed it,—or who would have felt more compassion for the party who had suffered it than he himself.

Instead therefore, of declaring the real intention of his errand, by a direct accusation and reproof for the crimes he had committed, he comes to him with a fictitious complaint, of a cruel act of injustice done by another; and accordingly, he frames a case,—not so parallel to David's as he supposed would awaken his suspicion, and prevent a patient and candid hearing,—and yet not so void of resemblance, in the main circumstances, as to fail of striking him, when shown in a proper light.

And Nathan came and said unto him, "There "were two men in one city, the one rich, and the "other poor—the rich man had exceeding many "flocks and herds, but the poor man had nothing

"save one little ewe-lamb, which he had bought
"and nourished up—and it grew up together with
"him and with his children—it did eat of his
"own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay
"in his bosom, and was unto him as a daugh-
"ter——and there came a traveller unto the rich
"man, and he spared to take of his own flock
"and of his own herd to dress for the way-faring
"man that was come unto him, but took the poor
"man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was
"come unto him."

The case was drawn up with great judgment and beauty,——the several minute circumstances which heightened the injury, so truly affecting—and so strongly urged, that it would have been impossible for any man, with a previous sense of guilt upon his mind, to have defended himself from some degree of remorse, which it must naturally have excited.

The story, though it spoke only of the injustice and oppressive act of another man,—yet it pointed to what he had lately done himself, with all the circumstances of its aggravation:——And withal, the whole was so tenderly addressed to the heart and passions, as to kindle, at once, the utmost horror and indignation. And so it did,—but not against the proper person. In his transport, he forgot himself;——his anger greatly kindled against the man,—and he said unto Nathan, "As
"the LORD liveth the man that hath done this
"thing shall surely die; and he shall restore the
"lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and
"because he had no pity."

It can scarce be doubted here, but that David's anger was *real*, and that he was what he appeared to be, greatly provoked and exasperated against the offender: And, indeed, his sentence against him, proves he was so above measure. For, to *punish the man* with death, and oblige him to re-

store fourfold besides, was highly unequitable, and not only disproportioned to the offence, but far above the utmost rigor and severity of the law, which allowed a much softer atonement, requiring, in such a case, no more than an ample restitution and recompence in kind. The judgment, however seems to have been truly sincere, and well-meant; and bespoke rather the honest rashness of an unsuspicious judge, than the cool, determination of a conscious and guilty man, who knew he was going to pass sentence upon himself.

I take notice of this particular, because it places this instance of self-deceit, which is the subject of the discourse, in the strongest light, and fully demonstrates the truth of a fact in this great man, which happens every day among ourselves, namely that a man may be guilty of very bad and dishonest actions, and yet reflect so little, or so partially, upon what he has done, as to keep his conscience free, not only from guilt, but even the remotest auspicions that he is the man which in truth he is, and what the tenor and evidence of his life demonstrate. If we look into the world —David's is no uncommon case;—we see some one or other perpetually copying this bad original, —sitting in judgment upon himself,—hearing his own cause, and not knowing what he is doing; hasty in passing sentence, and even executing it too, with wrath, upon the person of another, when, in the language of the prophet, one might say to him, with justice, "Thou art the man."

Of the many revengeful, covetous, false, and ill-natured persons which we complain of in the world, tho' we all join in the cry against them— what man amongst us singles out himself as a criminal, or ever once takes it into his head that he adds to the number?—or, where is there a man so bad, who would not think it the hardest and most unfair imputation, to have any of those particular *vices laid to his charge*?

If he has the symptoms never so strong upon him, which he would pronounce infallible in another, they are indications of no such malady in himself—He sees, what no one else sees, some secret and flattering circumstances in his favor, which, no doubt, make a wide difference betwixt his case and the party's which he condemns.

What other man speaks so often and vehemently against the vice of pride, sets the weakness of it in a more odious light, or is more hurt with it in another, than the proud man himself? It is the same with the passionate, the designing, the ambitious, and some other common characters in life; and being a consequence of the nature of such vices, and almost inseparable from them, the effects of it are generally so gross and absurd, that, where pity does not forbid, it is pleasant to observe and trace the cheat through the several turnings and windings of the heart, and detect it thro' all the shapes and appearances which it puts on.

Next to these instances of self-deceit, and utter ignorance of our true disposition and character, which appear in not seeing *that* in ourselves which shocks us in another man; there is another species still more dangerous and delusive, and which the more guarded perpetually fall into, from the judgments they make of different vices, according to their age and complexion, and the various ebbs and flows of their passions and desires.

To conceive this, let any man look into his own heart, and observe in how different a degree of detestation numbers of actions stand there, though equally bad and vicious in themselves: He will soon find, that such of them as strong inclination or custom has prompted him to commit, are generally dressed out and painted with all the false beauties which a soft and flattering hand can give them; and that the others, to which he feels no propensity, appear at once, naked and deformed,

surrounded with all the true circumstances of their folly and dishonor.

When David surprized Saul sleeping in the cave, and cut off the skirt of his robe, we read, his heart smote him for what he had done.—Strange, it smote him not in this matter of Uriah, where it had so much stronger reason to take the alarm!—A whole year had almost passed, from the first commission of this injustice, to the time the prophet was sent to reprove him;—and we read not once of any remorse or compunction of heart for what he had done; and it is not to be doubted, had the same prophet met him when he was returning up out of the cave,—and told him, that, scrupulous and conscientious as he then seemed, and thought himself to be, that he was deceiving himself, and was capable of committing the foulest and most dishonorable actions;—that he should one day murder a faithful and a valiant servant, whom he ought in justice, to have loved and honored;——that he should, without pity, first wound him in the tenderest part, by taking away his dearest possession—and then unmercifully and treacherously rob him of his life.—Had Nathan, in a prophetic spirit, foretold to David, that he was capable of this, and that he should one day actually do it, and from no other motive but the momentary gratification of a base and unworthy passion, he would have received the prediction with horror, and said, possibly, with Hazael, upon just such another occasion, and with the same ignorance of himself,—*What! is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?* And yet, in all likelihood, at that very time, there wanted nothing but the same degree of temptation, and the same opportunity, to induce him to the sin, which afterwards overcame him.

Thus the case stands with us still. When the passions are warmed, and the sin which presents

itself exactly tallies to the desire, observe how impetuously a man will rush into it, and act against all principles of honor, justice, and mercy.—Talk to him the moment after upon the nature of another vice to which he is not addicted, and from which, perhaps, his age, his temper, or rank in life, secure him; take notice how well he reasons—with what equity he determines—what an honest indignation and sharpness he expresses against it, and how insensibly his anger kindles against the man who has done this thing.

Thus are we nice in grains and scruples,—but knaves in matters of a pound weight;—every day straining at knats, yet swallowing camels;—miserably cheating ourselves, and torturing our reason, to bring us in such a report of the sin, as suits the present appetite and inclination.

Most of us are aware of, and pretend to detest, the bare-faced instances of that hypocrisy by which we deceive others; but few of us are upon our guard to see that more fatal hypocrisy by which we deceive & over-reach our own hearts. It is a flattering and dangerous distemper, which has undone thousands;—we bring the seeds of it along with us into the world—they insensibly grow up with us from our childhood,—they lie long concealed and undisturbed, and have generally got such deep root in our natures, by the time we are come to years of understanding and reflection that it requires all we have got to defend ourselves from their effects.

To make the case still worse on our sides, it is with this, as with every grievous distemper of the body,—the remedies are dangerous and doubtful in proportion to our mistakes and ignorance of the cause: For, in the instances of self deceit, tho' the head is sick, and the whole heart faint, the patient seldom knows what he ails:—Of all the things we know and learn, this necessary knowledge comes to us the last.

Upon what principles it happens thus, I have endeavored to lay open in the first part of this discourse; which I conclude with a serious exhortation to struggle against them; which we can only hope to do, by conversing more and oftner with ourselves, than the business and diversions of the world generally give us leave.

We have a chain of thoughts, desires, engagements and idlenesses, which perpetually turn upon us in their proper time and order——let us, I beseech you, assign and set apart some small portion of the day for this purpose,—of retiring into ourselves, and searching into the dark corners and recesses of the heart, and taking notice of what is passing there. If a man can bring himself to do this task with a curious and impartial eye, he will quickly find, the fruits of it will more than recompense his time and labor. He will see several irregularities and unsuspected passions within him, which he never was aware of;—he will discover in his progress, many secret turnings and windings in his heart to which he was a stranger, which now gradually open and disclose themselves to him upon a nearer view; in these labyrinths, he will trace out such hidden springs and motives for many of his most applauded actions, as will make him rather sorry, and ashamed of himself than proud.

In a word, he will understand *his errors*, and then see the necessity, with David, of imploring God to cleanse him from his secret faults—and with some hope and confidence to say, with this great man after his conviction——"Try me, O "God! and seek the ground of my heart,—prove "me, and examine my thoughts,—look well if "there be any way of wickedness in me, and "lead me in the way everlasting."

Now, to God the Father, &c. &c.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Sermon, with the following Dedication to the Lord Bishop of *Carlisle*, then Dean of *York*, was printed some years ago, but was read by very few; it is therefore reprinted in this collection.

TO THE

VERY REVEREND

RICHARD OSBALDESTON, D. D.

DEAN OF YORK.

SIR,

I HAVE taken the liberty to inscribe this discourse to you, in testimony of the great respect which I owe your character in general, and from a sense of what is due to it in particular from every member of the *Church of YORK*.

I wish I had as good a reason for doing that, which has given me the opportunity of making so public and just an acknowledgment: Being afraid there can be little left to be said upon the subject of Charity, which has not been often thought, and much better expressed, by many who have gone before: And indeed it seems so beaten and common a path, that it is not an easy matter for a new-comer to distinguish himself in it, by any thing, except the novelty of his *Vehicle*.

I beg, however, sir, your kind acce
ance of it, and of the motives which h
induced me to address it to you; one
which, I cannot conceal, in justice to
self, because it has proceeded from
sense of many favors and civilities wh
I have received from you.

I am,

REVEREND SIR,

Your most obliged,

and faithful,

humble servant,

LAURENCE STERN

SERMON V.

The case of Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath, considered. A charity sermon.

I. KINGS, XVII. 16.

And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by the prophet Elijah.

THE words of our text are the record of a miracle wrought in behalf of the widow of Zarephath, who had charitably taken Elijah under her roof, and administered unto him in a time of great scarcity and distress. There is something very interesting and affectionate in the manner this story is related in holy writ; and as it concludes with a second still more remarkable proof of GOD's favor to the same person, in the restoration of her dead son to life, one cannot but consider both miracles as rewards of that act of piety, wrought by infinite power, and left upon record in scripture, not merely as testimonies of the prophet's divine mission, but likewise as two encouraging instances of GOD Almighty's blessing upon works of charity and benevolence.

In this view, I have made choice of this piece of sacred story, which I shall beg leave to make use of as the ground-work for an exhortation to charity in general: And, that it may better answer the particular purpose of this solemnity, I will endeavor to enlarge upon it with such reflections, as, I trust in GOD, will excite some sentiments of compassion which may be profitable to so pious a design.

Elijah had fled from two dreadful evils, the approach of a famine, and the persecution of Ahab, an enraged enemy; and, in obedience to the com-

mand of God, had hid himself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. In this safe and peaceful solitude, blessed with daily marks of God's providence, the holy man dwelt free, both from the cares and glories of the world: By miraculous impulse, *the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening, and he drank of the brook*; till by continuance of drought, (the windows of heaven being shut up in those days for three years and six months, which was the natural cause likewise of the famine,) it came to pass, after a while, that the brook, the great fountain of support, dried up; and he is again directed by the word of the Lord where to betake himself for shelter. He is commanded to arise and go to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, with an assurance that he had disposed the heart of a widow woman there to sustain him.

The prophet follows the call of his God:—The same hand which brought him to the gate of the city, had led also the poor widow out of her doors, oppressed with sorrow. She had come forth upon a melancholy errand, to make preparation to eat her last meal, and share it with her child.

No doubt, she had long fenced against this tragical event, with all the thrifty management which self-preservation and parental love could inpire; full, no doubt, of cares, and many tender apprehensions, lest her tender stock should fail them before the return of plenty.

But as she was a widow, having lost the only faithful friend who would best have assisted her in this virtuous struggle, the present necessity of the times at length overcame her; and she was just falling down an easy prey to it, when Elijah came to the place where she was. *And he called unto her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink. And as she was going to fetch it, he called unto her, and said, Bring me, I pray*

thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand. And she said, as the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse, and, behold I am gathering two sticks, that I may go and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it and die. And Elijah said unto her, Fear not, but go and do as thou hast said: But make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son. For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth.

True charity is always unwilling to find excuses—else here was a fair opportunity of pleading many: She might have insisted over again upon her situation, which necessarily tied up her hands;——she might have urged the unreasonableness of the request;——that she was reduced to the lowest extremity already; and that it was contrary to justice, and the first law of nature, to rob herself and child of their last morsel, and give it to a stranger.

But, in generous spirits, compassion is sometimes more than a balance for self preservation.

For, as God certainly interwove that friendly softness in our nature, to be a check upon too great a propensity towards self-love—so it seemed to operate here.—For it is observable, that, tho' the prophet backed his request with the promise of an immediate recompense, in multiplying her stock; yet it is not evident she was influenced at all by that temptation. For if she had, doubtless it must have wrought such a mixture of self-interest into the motive of her compliance, as must greatly have allayed the merit of the action. But this, I say, does not appear, but rather the contrary, from the reflection she makes upon the whole, in the last verse of the chapter. *Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the lord in thy mouth is truth.*

Besides, as she was an inhabitant of Zarepha (or, as it is called by St. Luke, Sarepta, subje to Sidon, the metropolis of Phenicia, witho the bounds of GOD's people), she had been broug up in gross darkness and idolatry, in utter ign rance of the LORD GOD of Israel: Or, if she h heard of his name, which is all that seems pr bable, she had been taught to misbelieve the mig ty wonders of his hand, and was still less like to believe his prophet.

Moreover, she might argue, if this man, l some secret mystery of his own, or through tl power of his GOD, is able to procure so pretern tural a supply for me, whence comes it to pas that he now stands in want himself, oppress both with hunger and thirst?

It appears, therefore, that she must have be wrought upon by an unmixed principle of hum nity.——She looked upon him as a fellow-partn almost in the same affliction with herself.——Sl considered he had come a weary pilgrimage, in sultry climate, through an exhausted countr where neither bread or water were to be had, b by acts of liberality.—That he had come an u known traveller; and, as a hard heart never wan a pretence, that this circumstance, which shou rather have befriended, might have helped to o press him.—She considered, (for charity is ev fruitful in kind reasons), that he was now far fro his own country, and had strayed out of the rea of the tender offices of some one who affectionat ly mourned his absence—Her heart was touch with pity—She turned in silence, and *went a did according as he had said. And behold, both sh and he, and her house, did eat many days*; or, as the margin, one whole year. *And the barrel meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, un the day that GOD sent rain upon the earth.*

Though it may not seem necessary to raise co

jectures here upon this event, yet it is natural to suppose, the danger of the famine being thus unexpectedly got over, that the mother began to look hopefully forwards upon the rest of her days. There were many widows in Israel at that time, when the heavens were shut up for three years and six months; yet, as St. Luke observes, *to none of them was the prophet sent, save to this widow of Sarepta.* In all likelihood, she would not be the last in making the same observation, and drawing from it some flattering conclusion in favor of her son.——Many a parent would build high upon a worse foundation.——"Since the GOD of Israel "has thus sent his own messenger to us in our "distress, to pass by so many houses of his own "people, and stop at mine, to save it, in so mira"culous a manner, from destruction,—doubtless "this is but an earnest of his future kind inten"tions to us; at least, his goodness has decreed "to comfort my old age, by the long life and "health of my son:—But perhaps he has some"thing greater still in store for him, and I shall "live to see the same hand hereafter crown his "head with glory and honor." We may naturally suppose her innocently carried away with such thoughts, when she is called back by an unexpected distemper which surprizes her son, and, in one moment, brings down all her hopes—*for his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him.*—

The expostulations of immoderate grief are seldom just.——For, though Elijah had already preserved her son, as well as herself, from immediate death, and was the last cause to be suspected of so sad an accident;—yet the passionate mother, in the first transport, challenges him as the author of her misfortunes;——as if he had brought down sorrow upon a house, which had so hospitably sheltered him. The prophet was too full

of compassion, to make reply to so unkind an accusation. He takes the dead child *out of his mother's bosom, and laid him upon his own bed; and he cried unto the* LORD, *and said, O* LORD *my* GOD! *hast thou brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son?* "Is this the reward "of all her charity and goodness? Thou hast be- "fore this robbed her of a dear partner of all her "joys, and all her cares; and now that she is a "widow, and has most reason to expect thy pro- "tection, behold, thou hast withdrawn her last "prop;—thou hast taken away her child, the "only stay she had to rest on."—*And Elijah cried unto* GOD, *and said, O* LORD *my* GOD, *I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again.*

The prayer was urgent, and bespoke the distress of an human mind, deeply suffering in the misfortunes of another.——Moreover his heart was rent with other passions;—he was zealous for the name and honor of his GOD, and thought not only his omnipotence, but his glorious attribute of mercy concerned in the event: For, oh! with what triumph would the prophets of Baal retort his own bitter taunt, and say, *his* GOD *was either talking, or he was pursuing, or was in a journey; or, peradventure he slept, and should have been awaked.*—He was moreover involved in the success of his prayer himself;——honest minds are most hurt by scandal:—And he was afraid, lest so foul an one, so unworthy of his character, might arise among the Heathen, who would report with pleasure, "Lo, the widow of Zarephath, took the mes- "senger of the GOD of Israel under her roof, and "kindly entertained him, and see how she is re- "warded! surely the prophet was ungrateful, he "wanted power, or, what is worse he wanted pity.

Besides all this, he pleaded not only the cause of the widow, it was the cause of charity itself, which had received a deep wound already, and

would suffer still more, should GOD deny it this testimony of his favor. *So the LORD hearkened unto the voice of Elijah, and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived. And Elijah took the child, and brought him down out of the chamber into the house, and delivered him unto his mother: And Elijah said, see, thy son liveth.*

It would be a pleasure to a good mind, to stop here a moment, and figure to itself the picture of so joyful an event.—To behold, on one hand, the raptures of the parent, overcome with surprize and gratitude, and imagine how a sudden stroke of such impetuous joy must operate on a despairing countenance, long accustomed to sadness.—To conceive, on the other side of the *piece*, the holy man approaching with the child in his arms—full of honest triumph in his looks, but sweetened with all the kind sympathy which a gentle nature could overflow with upon so happy an event. It is a subject one might recommend to the pencil of a great genius; and would even afford matter for description here, but that it would lead us too far from the particular purpose, for which I have enlarged upon thus much of the story already; the chief design of which is, to illustrate by a fact, what is evident both in reason and scripture, that a charitable and good action is seldom cast away, but that, even in this life, it is more than probable, that what is so scattered, shall be gathered again with increase. *Cast thy bread upon the waters, and thou shalt find it after many days. Be as a father unto the fatherless, and instead of a husband unto their mother: So shalt thou be as the Son of the Most High, and he will love thee more than thy mother doth. Be mindful of good turns, for thou knowest not what evil shall come upon the earth; and when thou fallest, thou shalt find a stay. It shall preserve thee from all affliction, and fight for thee against thy enemies, better than a mighty shield and a strong spear.*

The great instability of temporal affairs, and constant fluctuation of every thing in this world, afford perpetual occasions of taking refuge in such a security.

What, by successive misfortunes; by failings and cross accidents in trade; by miscarriage of projects:—What by unsuitable expenses of parents, extravagance of children, and the many other secret ways whereby riches make themselves wings and fly away; so many surprising revolutions do every day happen in families, that it may not seem strange to say, that the posterity of some of the most liberal contributors here, in the changes which one century may produce, may possibly find shelter under this very plant which they now so kindly water. Nay, so quickly sometimes has the wheel turn'd round, that many a man has lived to enjoy the benefit of that charity which his own piety projected.

But, besides this, and exclusive of the right which GOD's promise gives it to protection hereafter, charity and benevolence, in the ordinary chain of effects, have a natural and more immediate tendency in themselves, to rescue a man from the accidents of the world, by softening the hearts and winning every man's wishes to its interest. When a compassionate man falls, who would not pity him? who, that had power to do it, would not befriend and raise him up? or could the most barbarous temper offer an insult to his distress, without pain and reluctance?—So that it is almost a wonder that covetousness, even in spite of itself, does not sometimes argue a man into charity, by its own principle of looking forwards, and the firm expectation it would delight in, of receiving its own again with usury.—So evident is it in the course of GOD's providence, and the natural stream of things, that a good office, one time or other, generally meets with a reward.—Generally, did I say——how can it ever fail?——

besides all this, so large a share of recom-
s so inseparable even from the action itself.
e man who has a tear of tenderness always
o shed over the unfortunate ; who, withal,
dy to distribute, and willing to communi-
ask him, if the best things which wits have
pleasure, have expressed what he has felt,
by a seasonable kindness, he has *made the*
f the widow to sing for joy. Mark then the
sions of unutterable pleasure and harmony
looks ; and say, whether Solomon has not
the point of true enjoyment in the right
when he declares, "that he knew no good
e was in any of the riches or honors of this
d, *but for a man to do good with them in his*
" Nor was it without reason he made this
ient—Doubtless he had found and seen the
ciency of all sensual pleasures ; how unable
nish either a rational or a lasting scheme of
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n vanity and vexation of spirit. But that this
pure and refined a nature, it burned with-
nsuming ; it was figuratively *the widow's*
of meal which wasted not, and the cruse of oil
never failed.

an easy matter to add weight to the testi-
of *the wise man*, upon the pleasure of do-
od ; or else the evidence of the philosopher
rus is very remarkable, whose word in this
is the more to be trusted, because a pro-
sensualist ; who, amidst all the delicacies
nprovements of pleasure which a luxuriant
might strike out, still maintained, that the
ay of enlarging human happiness, was by a
unication of it to others.

I if it was necessary here, or there was time
ine upon this decline, one might farther
ain, exclusive of the happiness which the

mind itself feels in the exercise of this virtue, that the very body of man is never in a better state than when he is most inclined to do good offices; —that as nothing more contributes to health than a benevolence of temper, so nothing generally is a stronger indication of it,

And what seemes to confirm this opinion, is an observation, the truth of which must be submitted to every one's reflection—namely—that a disinclination and backwardness to do good, is often attended, if not produced, by an indisposition of the animal as well as rational part of us; So naturally do the soul and body, as in other cases, so in this, mutually befriend, or prey upon each other. And, indeed, setting aside all abstruser reasoning upon the point, I cannot conceive, but that the very *mechanical motions* which maintain life, must be performed with more equal vigor and freedom in that man, whom a great and good soul perpetually inclines to show mercy to the miserable, than they can be in a poor, sordid, selfish wretch, whose little, contracted heart, melts at no man's affliction; but sits brooding so intently over its own plots and concerns, as to see and feel nothing, and, in truth, enjoy nothing beyond himself; and of whom, one may say what that great master of nature has, speaking of a natural sense of harmony, which, I think, with more justice, may be said of compassion, that the man who had it not,—

" *Was fit for treasons, stratagems and spoils:*
" *The* MOTIONS *of his spirit are dull as night;*
" *And his affections dark as* EREBUS:
" ———*Let no such man be trusted.*"

What divines say of the mind naturalists have observed of the body,—that there is no passion so natural to it as love, which is the principle of

doing good;—and, though instances like this just mentioned, seem far from being proofs of it, yet it is not to be doubted, but that every hard-hearted man has felt much inward opposition before he could prevail upon himself to do aught to fix and deserve the character: And that what we say of long habits of vice, that they are hard to be subdued, may, with equal truth, be said concerning the natural impressions of benevolence, that a man must do much violence to himself, and suffer many a painful struggle, before he can tear away so great and noble a part of his nature.—Of this, antiquity has preserved a beautiful instance, in an anecdote of Alexander, the Tyrant of Pheres, who though he had so industriously hardened his heart, as to seem to take delight in cruelty, insomuch as to murder many of his subjects every day, without cause, and without pity; yet, at the bare representation of a tragedy which related the misfortunes of Hecuba and Andromache, he was so touched with the fictitious distress which the poet had wrought up in it, that he burst out into a flood of tears:—The explication of which inconsistency is easy, and casts as great a lustre upon human nature, as the man himself was a disgrace to it. The case seems to have been this:——In *real* life he had been blinded with passions, and thoughtlessly hurried on by interest or resentment;—but here, there was no room for motives of that kind: So that his attention being first caught hold of, and all his vices laid asleep;—then NATURE awoke in triumph, and showed how deeply she had sown the seeds of compassion in every man's breast; when tyrants, with vices the most at enmity with it, were not able entirely to root it out.

But this is painting an amiable virtue, and setting her off with shades which wickedness lends us, when one might safely trust to the force of her own natural charms, and ask, whether any thing

under Heaven, in its own nature, is more lovely and engaging?—To illustrate this the more, let us turn our thoughts within ourselves; and, for a moment, let any number of us here imagine ourselves at this instant engaged in drawing the most perfect and amiable character, such as, according to our conceptions of the Deity, we should think most acceptable to him, and most likely to be universally admired of all mankind.—I appeal to your own thoughts, whether the first idea which offered itself to most of our imaginations, would not be that of a compassionate benefactor, stretching forth his hand to raise up the helpless orphan? Whatever other virtues we should give our hero, we should all agree in making him a generous friend, who thought the opportunities of doing good, to be the only charm of his prosperity: We should paint him like the psalmist's *river of God*, overflowing the thirsty parts of the earth, that he might enrich them, carrying plenty and gladness along with him. If this was not sufficient, and we were still desirous of adding a farther degree of perfection to so great a character, we should endeavor to think of some one, if human nature could furnish such a pattern, who, if occasion required, was willing to undergo all kinds of affliction, to sacrifice himself, to forget his dearest interests, and even lay down his life for the good of mankind.—And here—O merciful SAVIOUR! how would the bright original of thy unbounded goodness break in upon our hearts? *Thou who becamest poor, that we might be rich*—though Lord of all this world, *yet hadst not where to lay thy head*———and though equal in power and glory to the great GOD of NATURE, *yet madest thyself of no reputation, tookest upon thee the form of a servant*,—submitting thyself, without opening thy mouth, to all the indignities which a thankless and undiscerning people could offer; and at length, to

accomplish our salvation, *becamest obedient unto death*, suffering thyself, as on this day*, *to be led like a lamb to the slaughter!*

The consideration of this stupendous instance of compassion in the Son of God, is the most unanswerable appeal that can be made to the heart of man, for the unreasonableness of it in himself. —It is the great argument which the apostles use in almost all their exhortations to good works.—*Beloved, if Christ so loved us*—the inference is unavoidable; and gives strength and beauty to every thing else which can be urged upon the subject. And therefore I have reserved it for my last and warmest appeal, with which I would gladly finish this discourse, that, at least for their sakes for whom it is preached, we might be left to the full impression of so exalted and so seasonable a motive—that by reflecting upon the infinite labor of this day's love, in the instance of Christ's death, we may consider what an immense debt we owe to each other—and by calling to mind the amiable pattern of his life, in doing good, we might learn in what manner we may best discharge it.

And indeed, of all the methods in which a good mind would be willing to do it, I believe there can be none more beneficial, or comprehensive in its effects, than that for which we are here met together;—the proper education of poor children being the ground work of almost every other kind of charity, as that which makes every other subsequent act of it answer the pious expectation of the giver.

Without this foundation first laid, how much kindness in the progress of a benevolent man's life is unavoidably cast away? and sometimes where it is as senseless as the exposing a tender plant to all the inclemencies of a cruel season, and then

* Preached on Good Friday.

going with sorrow to take it in, when the
already dead. I said, therefore, this w
foundation of almost every kind of charit
might not one have added, of all polic
since the many ill consequences which att
want of it, though grievously felt by the
themselves, are no less so by the comm
which they are members ; and, moreove
mischiefs, seem the hardest to be redress
Insomuch, that when one considers the
seductions of Popery on one hand, and
other, that no bad man, whatever he profes
be a good subject, one may venture to say
been cheaper and better for the nation t
borne the expense of instilling sound pr
and good morals into the neglected chi
the lower sort, especially in some parts c
Britain, than to be obliged, so often as
been within this last century, to rise up a
ourselves against the rebellious effects wh
want of them have brought down even
doors. And in fact, if we are to trust ar
of which, in this case, we have no reasor
pute, this matter has been looked upon
vast importance to the civil happiness an
of a people, that some commonwealths, t
eminent for political wisdom, have chose
a public concern of it; thinking it mu
to be entrusted to the prudence of the ma
than to the mistaken tenderness, or the
partiality of the parent.

It was consistent with this, and bespok
refined sense of policy in the Lacedæn
(though, by the way, I believe, differe
what more modern politics would have
in like circumstances), when Antipater de
of them fifty children, as hostages for the
of a distant engagement, they made th
and wise answer, "They would not—th

"not consent:—They would rather give him "double the number of their best up-grown "men."—Intimating, that however they were distressed, they would choose any inconvenience rather than suffer the loss of their country's education, and the opportunity (which if once lost can never be regained) of giving their youth an early tincture of religion, and bringing them up to a love of industry, and a love of the laws and constitution of their country.—If this shows the great importance of a proper education to children of all ranks and conditions, what shall we say then of those whom the providence of GOD has placed in the very lowest lot of life, utterly cast out of the *way* of knowledge,—without a parent,—sometimes may be, without a friend to guide and instruct them, but what common pity, and the necessity of their sad situation, engages:—Where the dangers which surround them on every side are so great and many, that, for one fortunate passenger in life, who makes his way well in the world with such early disadvantages, and so dismal a setting out, we may reckon thousands who every day suffer shipwreck, and are lost for ever.

If there be a case under heaven which calls out aloud for the more immediate exercise of compassion, and which may be looked upon as the compendium of all charity, surely it is this; and I am persuaded there could want nothing more to convince the greatest enemy to this kind of charity, hat it is so, but a bare opportunity of taking a nearer view of some of the more distressful objects of it.

Let him go to the dwellings of the unfortunate, into some mournful cottage, where poverty and affliction reign together. There let him behold the disconsolate widow—sitting—steeped in tears—thus sorrowing over the infant she knows not how to succor——"O my child, thou art now

"left exposed to a wide and vicious world too "full of snares and temptations for thy tender and "unpractised age. Perhaps a parent's love may "magnify those dangers.—But when I consider "thou art driven out naked into the midst of "them, without friends, without fortune, without "instruction, my heart bleeds beforehand for the "evils which may come upon thee. God in "whom we trusted, is witness, so low had his pro-"vidence placed us, that we never indulged one "wish to have made thee rich;—virtuous we "would have made thee;—for thy father, *my* "*husband, was a good man, and feared the Lord*:— "And though all the fruits of his care and in-"dustry were little enough for our support, yet "he honestly had determined to have spared "some portion of it, scanty as it was, to have pla-"ced thee safely in the way of knowledge and in-"struction.—But, alas! he is gone from us, ne-"ver to return more, and with him are fled the "means of doing it:—For, *behold, the creditor is* "*come upon us*, to take all that we have."—Grief is eloquent, and will not easily be imitated.—— But let the man, who is the least friend to distresses of this nature, conceive some disconsolate widow uttering her complaint even in this manner, and then let him consider, *if there is any sorrow like this sorrow, wherewith the Lord has afflicted* her? or whether there can be any charity like that, of taking *the child out of the mother's bosom*, and rescuing her from these apprehensions? Should a Heathen, a stranger to our holy religion, and the love it teaches, should he, *as he journeyed, come to the place where* she lay, *when he saw, would he not have compassion on* her? God forbid a Christian should *this day* want it? or at any time *look upon* such a distress, *and pass by on the other side.*

Rather let him do as his Saviour taught him, *bind up the wounds, and pour* comfort into the

heart of one whom the hand of GOD has bruised. Let him practise what it is, with Elijah's transport, to say to the afflicted widow,——*See, thy son liveth!*——liveth by my charity, and the bounty of this hour, to all the purposes which make life desirable,—to be made a good man, and a profitable subject: On one hand, to be trained up to such a sense of his duty, as may secure him an interest in the world to come; and with regard to this world, to be so brought up in it, to a love of honest labor and industry, as all his life long to earn and eat his bread with joy and thankfulness.

"Much peace and happiness rest upon the "head and heart of every one who thus brings "children to CHRIST.——May the blessings of "him that was ready to perish, come seasonably "upon him.—The Lord comfort him, *when he "most wants it*, when he lies sick upon his bed; "make thou, O GOD! all his bed in his sick-"ness; and for what he now scatters, give him, "then, that peace of thine which passeth all un-"derstanding, and which nothing in this world "can either give or take away." *Amen.*

SERMON VI.

Pharisee and Publican in the Temple.

LUKE xviii. 14. 1ſt part.

I tell you this man went down to his house justified rather than the other.

THESE words are the judgment which our SAVIOUR has left upon the behavior and different degrees of merit in the two men, the Pharisee and Publican, whom he represents, in the foregoing parable, as going up into the temple to pray. In what manner they discharged this great and solemn duty, will best be seen from a consideration of the prayer which each is said to have addressed to God upon the occasion.

The Pharisee, instead of an act of humiliation in that awful presence before which he stood—with an air of triumph and self-sufficiency, thanks God that he had not made him like others—extortioners, adulterers, unjust, or even as this Publican.—The Publican is represented as standing afar off, and with a heart touched with humility, from a just sense of his own unworthiness, is said only to have smote upon his breast, saying—— God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, adds our SAVIOUR, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other.

Though the justice of this determination strikes every one at first sight, it may not be amiss to enter into a more particular examination of the evidence and reasons upon which it might be

founded, not only because it may place the equity of this decision in favor of the Publican in a stronger light, but that the subject seems likely to lead me to a train of reflections not unsuitable to the solemnity of the season *.

The Pharisee was one of that sect, who, in our SAVIOUR's time, what by the austerity of their lives—their public alms-deeds, and greater pretences to piety than other men, had gradually wrought themselves into much credit and reputation with the people: And, indeed as the bulk of these are easily caught with appearances, their character seems to have been admirably well suited to such a purpose.—If you looked no farther than the outward part of it, you would think it made up of all goodness and perfection; an uncommon sanctity of life, guarded by great decorum and severity of manners,—profuse and frequent charities to the poor,—many acts of religion,—much observance of the law—much abstinence—much prayer.——

It is painful to suspect the appearance of so much good—and would have been so here, had not our blessed SAVIOUR left us the real character upon record, and drawn up by himself in one word—That the sect were like whitened sepulchres, all fair and beautiful without, and enriched there with whatever could attract the eye of the beholder; but, when searched within side, were full of corruption, and of whatever could shock and disgust the searcher. So that, with all their affectation of piety, and more extraordinary strictness and regularity in their outward deportment, all was irregular and uncultivated within—and all these fair pretences, how promising soever, blasted by the indulgence of the worst of human passions;—pride—spiritual pride—the worst of all

* *Preached in Lent.*

pride—hypocrisy, self-love, covetousness, extortion, cruelty, and revenge. What pity it is that the sacred name of religion should ever have been borrowed, and employed in so bad a work, as in covering over such a black catalogue of vices,—or that the fair form of virtue should have been thus disgraced, and for ever drawn into suspicion, from the unworthy uses of this kind, to which the artful and abandoned have often put her! The Pharisee seems to have had not many scruples of this kind, and the prayer he makes use of in the temple is a true picture of the man's heart, and shows with what a disposition and frame of mind he came to worship.——

God! I thank thee, that thou hast formed me of different materials from the rest of my species, whom thou hast created frail and vain by nature, but by choice and disposition utterly corrupt and wicked.

Me, thou hast fashioned in a different mould, and hast infused so large a portion of thy spirit into me, lo! I am raised above the temptations and desires to which flesh and blood are subject, —I thank thee, that thou hast made me thus—not a frail vessel of clay, like that of other men—or even this Publican, but that I stand here a chosen and sanctified vessel unto thee.

After this obvious paraphrase upon the words, which speaks no more than the true spirit of the Pharisee's prayer,—you would naturally ask, What reason was there for all this triumph—or what foundation could he have to insult in this manner over the infirmities of mankind—or even those of the humble Publican who stood before him?—Why, says he, I give tithes of all that I possess—Truly a very different account of himself—and if that was all he had to offer in his own behalf, God knows, it was but a weak foundation to support so much arrogance and self-con-

cit; because the observance of both the one and ie other of these ordinances, might be supposed ell enough to be consistent with the most profli- ate of life and manners.

The conduct and behavior of the Publican ap- ear very different—and, indeed, as much the re- erse to this as you could conceive. But, before we enter upon that, as I have spoke largely to the character of the Pharisee, it will be but justice to say a word or two in general to his.—The Pub- lican was one of that order of men employed by the Roman emperors in levying the taxes and con- tributions which were from time to time exacted from Judea, as a conquered nation. Whether from the particular fate of that employment, ow- ing to the fixed aversion which men have to part with what is their own, or from whatever other causes it happened——so it was, that the whole set of men were odious, insomuch, that the name of a Publican was a term of reproach and infamy among the Jews.

Perhaps, the many instances of rigor to which their office might direct them—heightened some- times by a mixture of cruelty and insolence of their own, and possibly always made to appear worse than they were, by the loud clamors and misrepresentations of others—all might have con- tributed to form and fix this odium. But it was here, no doubt, as in all other classes of men, whose professions expose them to more temptati- ons than that of others—that there are numbers who still behave well, and who, amidst all the snares and opportunities which lie in their way,— pass thro' them, not only with an unblemished character, but with the inward testimony of a good conscience.

The Publican, in all likelihood, was one of these —and the sentiments of candor and humility, which the view of his condition inspired, are such

as could come only from a heart and charact
thus described.

He goes up into the temple to pay his sacrifi
of prayer—in the discharge of which, he plea
no merit of his own—enters into no comparis
with others,—or justification of himself wi
GOD,—but, in reverence to that holier part of t
temple, where his presence was supposed mo
immediately to be displayed—he keeps afar off
is afraid to lift up his eyes towards heaven——b
smites upon his breast, and, in a short, but ferve
ejaculation,—submissively begs GOD to have me
cy upon his sins. O GOD! how precious! ho
amiable! is true humility! what a difference i
thy sight does it make to consist betwixt man an
man! Pride was not made for a creature wit
such manifold imperfections—religious pride is
dress which still worse becomes him, because,
all others, it is that to which he has least pretenc
—the best of us fall seven times a day, and ther
by add some degree of unprofitableness to the ch
racter of those who do all that is commande
them.—Was I perfect, therefore, says Job,
would not know my soul, I would be silent,
would be ignorant of my own righteousness; so
should I say I was perfect, it would prove me
be perverse. From this introduction, I will tak
occasion to recommend this virtue of religiou
humility, which so naturally falls from the sul
ject, and which cannot more effectually be e
forced, than by an inquiry into the chief cause
which produce the opposite vice to it—that of
spiritual pride; for, in this malady of the min
of man—the case is parallel with most others
his body, the dangers of which can never right
be apprehended, nor can remedies be applied, e
ther with judgment or success, till they are tr
ced back to the first principles, and the seeds
the disorder are laid open and considered.

And, first, I believe one of the most general causes of spiritual pride, is that which seems to have misled the Pharisee——a mistaken notion of the true principles of his religion. He thought, no doubt, that the whole of it was comprehended in the two articles of paying tithes and frequent fasting, and that, when he had discharged his consciences of them—he had done all that was required at his hands, and might with reason go and thank GOD that he had not made him like others.—It is not to be questioned, but through force of this error, the Pharisee might think himself to be, what he pretended, a religious and upright man.—For, however he might be brought to act a double and insincere part in the eyes of men upon worldly views—it is not to be supposed —that when he stood by himself, apart in the temple, and no witnesses of what passed between him and his GOD——that he should knowingly and wilfully have dared to act so open and barefaced a scene of mockery in the face of Heaven. This is scarce probable—and therefore it must have been owing to some delusion in his education, which had early implanted in his mind false and wretched notions of the essentials of religion—which, as he grew up, had proved the seeds of infinite error, both in practice and speculation———

With the rest of his sect, he had been so principled and instructed, as to observe a scrupulous nicety and most religious exactness in the lesser matters of his religion—its frequent washings...its fastings, and other external rites, of no merit in themselves——but to stand exempted from the more troublesome exactness in the weightier matters of the law, which were of eternal and unchangeable obligation. So that they were in truth blind guides——who thus would strain at a gnat and yet swallow a camel; and, as our SAVIOUR

reproves them from a familiar instance of domestic inconsistency—would make clean the outside of the cup and platter—yet suffer the inside—the most meterial part, to be full of corruption and excess. From this knowledge of the character and principles of the Pharisee, it is easy to account for his sentiments and behavior in the temple, which were just such as they would have led one to have expected.

Thus it has always happened, by a fatality common to all such abuses of religion, as make it to consist in external rites and ceremonies more than inward purity and integrity of heart.——As these outward things are easily put in practice—and capable of being attained to without much capacity, or much opposition to flesh and blood—it too naturally betrays the professors of it into a groundless persuasion of their own godliness, and a despicable one of that of others, in their religious capacities, and the relations in which they stand towards God; which is the very definition of spiritual pride.

When the true heart and spirit of devotion is thus lost and extinguished under a cloud of ostentatious ceremonies and gestures, as is remarkable in the Romish church—where the celebration of high mass, when set off to the best advantage, with all its scenical decorations and finery, looks more like a theatrical performance, than that humble and solemn appeal which dust and ashes are offering up to the throne of God; when religion, I say, is thus clogged & borne down by such a weight of ceremonies—it is much easier to put in pretensions to holiness upon such a mechanical system as is left of it, than where the character is only to be got and maintained by a painful conflict, and perpetual war against the passions. It is easier for instance, for a zealous Papist to cross himself and tell his beads, than for a humble Protestant

to subdue the lusts of anger, intemperance, cruelty, and revenge,—to appear before his Maker with that preparation of mind which becomes him. The operation of being sprinkled with holy water is not so difficult in itself as that of being chaste and spotless within—conscious of no dirty thought or dishonest action. It is a much shorter way to kneel down at a confessional, and receive absolution, than to live so as to deserve it—not at the hands of men—but at the hands of GOD——who sees the heart, and cannot be imposed on.—The achievement of keeping Lent or abstaining from flesh on certain days, is not so hard, as that of abstaining from the works of it at all times—especially as the point is generally managed amongst the richer sort, with such art and epicurism at their tables—and with such indulgence to a poor mortified appetite—that an entertainment upon a fast is much more likely to produce a *surfeit*, than a fit of sorrow.

One might run the parallel much farther: But this may be sufficient to show how dangerous and delusive these mistakes are—how apt to mislead and overset weak minds, which are ever apt to be caught by the pomp of such external parts of religion. This is evident, that, even in our own church, where there is the greatest chastity in things of this nature—and of which none are retained in our worship, but what, I believe, tend to excite and assist it—yet so strong a propensity is there in our nature to sense—and so unequal a match is the understanding of the bulk of mankind, for the impressions of outward things—that we see thousands who every day mistake the shadow for the substance, and, was it fairly put to the trial, would exchange the reality for the appearance.

You see, this was almost universally the case of the Jewish church——where, for want of proper

guard and distinction betwixt the means of religion, and religion itself, the ceremonial part, in time, eat away the moral part, and left nothing but a shadow behind. It is to be feared, the buffooneries of the Romish church bid fair to do it the same ill office, to the disgrace and ruin of Christianity wherever Popery is established. What then remains, but that we rectify these gross and pernicious notions of religion, and place it upon its true bottom; which we can only do by bringing back religion to that cool point of reason which first showed us its obligation—by always remembering that GOD is a spirit, and must be worshipped suitable to his nature, *i. e.* in spirit and in truth—and that the most acceptable sacrifice we can offer him, is a virtuous and upright mind—and however necessary it is, not to leave the ceremonial and positive part of religion undone—yet not, like the Pharisee, to rest there—and omit the weightier matters, but keep this in view perpetually, that, tho' the instrumental duties of religion are duties of unquestionable obligation to us—yet they are still but INSTRUMENTAL DUTIES, conducive to the great end of all religion—which is to purify our hearts, and conquer our passions—and, in a word, to make us wiser and better men—better neighbors—better citizens—and better servants to GOD——To whom, &c.

SERMON VII.

Vindication of Human Nature.

ROMANS, xiv. 7.

For none of us liveth to himself.

THERE is not a sentence in scripture which strikes a narrow soul with greater astonishment;—and one might as easily engage to clear up the darkest problem in geometry to an ignorant mind, as make a sordid one comprehend the truth and reasonableness of this plain proposition.—No man liveth to himself!—Why!—does any man live to any thing else?—In the whole compass of human life, can a prudent man steer to a safer point?—Not live to himself!—To whom then?—Can any interests or concerns which are foreign to a man's self, have such a claim over him, that he must serve under them,—suspend his own pursuits,—step out of his right course, till others have passed by him, and attained the several ends and purposes of living before him?

If, with a selfish heart, such an inquirer should happen to have a speculating head too, he will proceed, and ask you, Whether this same principle, which the apostle here throws out, of the life of man, is not, in fact, the grand bias of his nature?—That however we may flatter ourselves with fine-spun notions of disinterestedness and heroism in what we do; that were the most popular of our actions stripped naked, and the truest motives and intentions of them searched to the bottom, we should find little reason for triumph upon that score.——

In a word, he will say, that a man is altogether a bubble to himself in this matter; and that, after all that *can be said in* his behalf, the truest defi-

nition that can be given of him, is this, That he is a selfish animal; and that all his actions have so strong a tincture of that character, as to show, (to whomsoever else he was intended to live) that, in fact, he lives only to himself.

Before I reply directly to this accusation, I cannot help observing, by the way, that there is scarce any thing which has done more disservice to social virtue than the frequent representations of human nature, under this hideous picture of deformity, which, by leaving out all that is generous and friendly in the heart of man, has sunk him below the level of a brute, as if he was a composition of all that was mean-spirited and selfish. Surely, it is one step towards acting well, to think worthily of our nature; and, as in common life, the way to make a man honest, is, to suppose him so, and treat him as such;——so here to set some value upon ourselves, enables us to support the character, and even inspires and adds sentiments of generosity and virtue to those which we have already pre-conceived. The scripture tells us, That God made man in his own image,—not surely in the sensitive and corporeal part of him,—that could bear no resemblance with a pure and infinite spirit;—but what resemblance he bore was undoubtedly in the moral rectitude, and the kind and benevolent affections of his nature. And though the brightness of his image has been sullied greatly by the fall of man in our first parents, and the characters of it rendered still less legible, by the many superinductions of his own depraved appetites since,——yet, it is a laudable pride, and a true greatness of mind, to cherish a belief, that there is so much of that glorious image still left upon it, as shall restrain him from base and disgraceful actions; to answer which end, what thought can be more conducive than that, of our being made in the like-

ness of the greatest and best of Beings? This is a plain consequence. And the consideration of it should have, in some measure, been a protection to human nature, from the rough usage she has met with from the satirical pens of so many of the French writers, as well as of our own country, who, with more wit than well-meaning, have desperately fallen foul upon the whole species, as a set of creatures incapable either of private friendship or public spirit, but just as the case suited their own interest and advantage.

That there is selfishness, and meanness enough, in the souls of one part of the world, to hurt the credit of the other part of it, is what I shall not dispute against; but, to judge of the whole, from this bad sample, and, because one man is plotting and artful in his nature,——or a second openly makes his pleasure or his profit the sole centre of all his designs,—or because a third strait-hearted wretch sits confined within himself——feels no misfortunes but those which touch himself: To involve the whole race, without mercy, under such detested characters, is a conclusion as false as it is pernicious; and, was it in general to gain credit, could serve no end but the rooting out of our nature all that is generous, and planting, in the stead of it, such an aversion to each other, as must untie the bands of society, and rob us of one of the greatest pleasures of it, the mutual communications of kind offices; and, by poisoning the fountain, render every thing suspected that flows thro' it.

To the honor of human nature, the scripture teaches us that God made man upright,—and, though he has since found out many inventions, which have much dishonored this noble structure, yet the foundation of it stands as it was,——the whole frame and design of it carried on upon social virtue and public spirit, and every member of us so evidently supported by this strong cement,

is altogether a selfish creature, (as these moralizers would make him), it is certain he does not arrive at the full maturity of it, in this time of his life.—No, If he deserves any accusation, it is in the other extreme, "That, in his youth he is "generally more FOOL than KNAVE;" and, so far from being suspected of living to himself, that he lives rather to every body else; the unconsciousness of art and design in his own intentions, rendering him so utterly void of a suspicion of it in others, as to leave him too oft a bubble to every one who would take the advantage.—But you will say, he soon abates of these transports of disinterested love; and as he grows older,—grows wiser, and learns to live more to himself.

Let us examine——

That a longer knowledge of the world, and some experience of insincerity,—will teach him a lesson of more caution in the choice of friendships, and less forwardness in the undistinguishing offers of his services, is what I grant. But, if he cools of these, does he not grow warmer still in connections of a different kind? Follow him, I pray you, into the next stage of life, where he has entered into engagements, and appears as the father of a family, and you will see the passion still remains—the stream somewhat more confined—but runs the stronger for it,—the same benevolence of heart, altered only in its course, and the difference of objects towards which it tends.—Take a short view of him in this light, as acting under the many tender claims which that relation lays upon him,—spending many weary days and sleepless nights,—utterly forgetful of himself,—intent only upon his family, and, with an anxious heart contriving and laboring to keep it from distress, against that hour when he shall be taken from its protection. Does such a one live to himself?—He who rises early, late takes rest, and eats

the bread of carefulness, to save others the sorrow of doing so after him; does such a one live only to himself?—Ye who are parents, answer this question for him. How oft have ye sacrificed your health,—your ease,—your pleasures,—nay, the very comforts of your lives, for the sake of your children?—How many indulgencies have ye given up?—What self-denials and difficulties have ye cheerfully undergone for them? In their sickness, or reports of their misconduct, how have ye *gone on your way sorrowing?* What alarms within you, when fancy forbodes but imaginary misfortunes hanging over them?—but when real ones have overtaken them, *and mischief befallen them in the way in which they have gone*, how, sharper than a sword, have ye felt the workings of parental kindness? In whatever period of human life we look for proofs of selfishness,—let us not seek them in this relation of a parent, whose whole life, when truly known, is often little else but a succession of cares, heart-aches, and disquieting apprehensions,—enough to show, that he is but an instrument in the hand of GOD to provide for the well being of others, to serve their interest as well as his own.

If you try the truth of this reasoning upon every other part or situation of the same life, you will find it holds good in one degree or other. Take a view of it out of those closer connections both of a friend and parent. Consider him, for a moment, under that natural alliance, in which even a heathen poet has placed him, namely, that of *a man*,—and as such, to his honor, as one incapable of standing unconcerned in whatever concerns his fellow-creatures. Compassion has so great a share in our nature, and the miseries of this world are so constant an exercise of it, as to leave it in no one's power, (who deserves the name of man,) in this respect *to live to himself.*

He cannot stop his ears against the cries of unfortunate——The sad story of the father and him that has no helper, *must* be heard—*sorrowful sighing of the prisoner will come be him;* and a thousand other untold cases of distr to which the life of man is subject, find a wa his heart, let interest guard the passage as it w —*if he hath this world's goods, and seeth his bro have need, he will not be able to shut up his bowel compassion from him.*

Let any man of common humanity look b upon his own life, as subjected to these str claims, and recollect the influence they have upon him—How oft the mere impulses of ge rosity and compassion have led him out of way;—in how many acts of charity and kindn his fellow-feeling for others has made him for himself;—in neighborly offices, how oft he acted against all considerations of profit, conv ence, nay, sometimes even of justice itself:— him add to this account, how much, in the p gress of his life, has been given up even to lesser obligations of civility and good manners what restraints they have laid him under;—h large a portion of time,—how much of his in nation, and the plan of life he should most h wished, has from time to time been made a crifice to his good-nature and disinclination give pain or disgust to others!

Whoever takes a view of the life of man, in t glass wherein I have shown it, will find it so set and hemmed in with obligations of one k or other, as to leave little room to suspect, t *man can live to himself:* And so closely has Creator linked us together (as well as all ot parts of his works) for the preservation of t harmony in the frame and system of things wh his wisdom has at first established,—that we t this bond of mutual dependence, however rela

is too strong to be broke; and I believe, that the most selfish men find it is so, and that they cannot, in fact, live so much to themselves, as the narrowness of their own hearts incline them. If these reflections are just upon the moral relations in which we stand to each other, let us close the examination with a short reflection upon the great relation in which we stand to GOD.

The first and most natural thought on this subject, which at one time or other will thrust itself upon every man's mind, is this,—That there is a GOD who made me,—to whose gift I owe all the powers and faculties of my soul, to whose providence I owe all the blessings of my life, and by whose permission it is that I exercise and enjoy them;—that I am placed in this world as a creature but of a day, hastening to the place from whence I shall not return; that I am accountable for my conduct and behavior to this greatest and wisest of Beings, before whose judgment-seat I must finally appear, and receive the things done in my body—whether they are good, or whether they are bad.

Can any one doubt, but the most inconsiderate of men sometimes sit down coolly, and make some such plain reflections as these upon their state and condition?—or that, after they have made them, can one imagine they lose all effect?—As little appearance as there is of religion in the world, there is a great deal of its influence felt in its affairs—nor can one so root out the principles of it, but, like nature, they will return again, and give checks and interruptions to guilty pursuits. There are seasons, when the thoughts of a just GOD overlooking, and the terror of an after-reckoning, have made the most determined tremble, and stop short in the execution of a wicked purpose. And if we conceive that the worst of men lay some restraints upon themselves from the weight

of this principle, what shall we think of the good and virtuous part of the world, who live under the perpetual influence of it,—who sacrifice their appetites and passions, from a conscience of their duty to GOD, and consider him as the object to whom they have dedicated their service, and make that the first principle and ultimate end of all their actions?—How many real and unaffected instances there are in this world, of men thus governed, will not so much concern us to inquire, as to take care that we are of the number: Which may GOD grant, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST.
Amen.

SERMON VIII.

Time and Chance.

ECCLES. IX. II.

I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favor to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.

WHEN a man casts a look upon this melancholy description of the world, and sees, contrary to all his guesses and expectations, what different fates attend the lives of men,—how oft it happens in the world, that there is not even bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, &c.—he is apt to conclude with a sigh upon it,—in the words,—tho' not in the sense of the wise man,—that time and chance happeneth to them all.—That time and chance,—apt seasons and fit conjunctures, have the greatest sway in the turns and disposals of mens fortunes: And that, as these lucky hits (as they are called) happen to be for, or against a man,—they either open the way to his advancement against all obstacles,—or block it up against all helps and attempts; that, as the text intimates, neither *wisdom*, nor *understanding*, nor *skill*, shall be able to surmount them.

However widely we may differ in our reasonings upon this observation of Solomon's, the authority of the observation is strong beyond doubt, and the evidence given of it in all ages so alternately confirmed by examples and complaints, as to leave the *fact itself* unquestionable.——That

things are carried on in this world, sometimes so contrary to all our reasonings, and the seeming probabilities of success—that, even the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong,—— nay, what is stranger still—nor yet bread to the wise, who should last stand in want of it,——nor yet riches to men of understanding, who you would think best qualified to acquire them,—nor yet favor to men of skill, whose merit and pretences bid the fairest for it—but that there are some secret and unseen workings in human affairs, which baffle all our endeavors,—and turn aside the course of things in such a manner,—that the most likely causes disappoint and fail of producing for us the effect which we wished and naturally expected from them.

You will see a man, of whom, was you to form a conjecture from the appearances of things in his favor—you would say was setting out in the world with the fairest prospect of making his fortune in it;—with all the advantages of birth to recommend him,—of personal merit to speak for him, —and of friends to help and push him forwards: You will behold him, notwithstanding this, disappointed in every effect you might naturally have looked for from them: Every step he takes towards his advancement, something invisible shall pull him back; some unforeseen obstacle shall rise up perpetually in his way, and keep him there.——In every application he makes,—some untoward circumstance shall blast it—He shall rise early,—late take rest,—and eat the bread of carefulness;—yet some happier man shall still rise up, and ever step in before him, and leave him struggling, to the end of his life, in the very same place in which he first began it.

The history of a second, shall in all respects be the contrast to this. He shall come into the *world* with the most unpromising appearance,—

shall set forwards without fortune, without friends —without talents to procure him either the one or the other. Nevertheless, you will see this clouded prospect brighten up insensibly, unaccountably before him; every thing presented in his way, shall turn out beyond his expectations; —in spight of that chain of unsurmountable difficulties which first threatened him—time and chance shall open him a way,——a series of successful occurrences shall lead him by the hand to the summit of honor and fortune, and, in a word, without giving him the pains of thinking, or the credit of projecting it, shall place him in safe possession of all that ambition could wish for.

The histories of the lives and fortunes of men are full of instances of this nature,—where favorable times, and lucky accidents, have done for them, what wisdom or skill could not: And there is scarce any one who has lived long in the world, who, upon looking backwards, will not discover such a mixture of these in the many successful turns which have happened in his life, as to leave him very little reason to dispute against the fact, and, I should hope, as little upon the conclusions to be drawn from it.

Some, indeed, from a superficial view of this representation of things, have atheistically inferred,—that because there was so much of lottery in this life,—and mere casualty seemed to have such a share in the disposal of our affairs,—that the providence of God stood neuter and unconcerned in their several workings, leaving them to the mercy of time and chance, to be furthered or disappointed as such blind agents directed.—Whereas, in truth, the very opposite conclusion follows. For consider,—if a superior intelligent power did not sometimes cross and overrule events in this world—then our policies and designs in it, would *always answer* according to the wisdom

and stratagem in which they were laid, and every cause, in the course of things, would produce its natural effect, without variation. Now, as this is not the case, it necessarily follows, from Solomon's reasoning, that, if the race is not to the swift,—if knowledge and learning do not always secure men from want,—nor care and industry always make men rich,—nor art and skill infallibly make men high in the world; that there is some other cause which mingles itself in human affairs, and governs and turns them as it pleases; which cause can be no other than the First Cause of all things, and the secret and overruling providence of that Almighty GOD, who, though his dwelling is so high, yet he humbleth himself to behold the things that are done on earth, raising up the poor out of the dust, and lifting the beggar from the dunghill, and, contrary to all hopes, putting him with princes, even with the princes of his people; which, by the way, was the case of David, who makes the acknowledgment!—And no doubt—one reason, why GOD has selected to his own disposal so many instances as this, where events have run counter to all probabilities—was to give testimony to his providence in governing the world, and to engage us to a consideration and dependence upon it, for the event and success of our undertakings.* For, undoubtedly—as I said,—it should seem but suitable to nature's law, that the race should ever be to the swift,—and the battle to the strong;—it is reasonable, that the best contrivances and means should have best success:—And since it often falls out otherwise in the case of man, where the wisest projects are overthrown,——and the most hopeful means are blasted, and time and chance happens to all;—— you must call in the Deity to untie this knot;—

* *Vid. Tillotson's sermon on this subject.*

For tho' at sundry times——sundry events fall out,—which we, who look no farther than the events themselves, call chance, because they fall out quite contrary, both to our intentions and hopes,—yet, at the same time, in respect of God's providence overruling in these events, it were prophane to call them chance, for they are pure designation; and, tho' invisible, are still the regular dispensations of the superintending power of that Almighty Being, from whom all the laws and powers of nature are derived,——who, as he has appointed,——so holds them as instruments in his hands; and, without invading the liberty and free-will of his creatures, can turn the passions and desires of their hearts to fulfil his own righteousness, and work such effects in human affairs, which to us seem merely *casual*,—but to him, certain and determined; and what his infinite wisdom sees necessary to be brought about, for the government and preservation of the world, over which providence perpetually presides.

When the sons of Jacob had cast their brother Joseph into the pit for his destruction,——one would think, if ever any accident which concerned the life of man deserved to be called chance, it was this,—that the company of Ishmaelites should happen to pass by, in that open country, at that very place, at that time too, when this barbarity was committed. After he was rescued by so favorable a contingency——his life and future fortune still depended upon a series of contingencies equally improbable. For instance, had the business of the Ishmaelites, who bought him, carried them from Gilead, to any other part of the world besides Egypt; or, when they arrived there, had they sold their bond-slave to any other man but Potiphar, throughout the whole empire,——or, after that disposal, had the unjust accusations *of his master's* wife cast the youth into

any other dungeon, than that where the king's prisoners were kept,—or had it fallen out at any other crisis, than when Pharaoh's chief butler was cast there too;—had this or any other of these events, fallen out otherwise than it did,——a series of unmerited misfortunes had overwhelmed him——and, in consequence the whole land of Egypt and Canaan. From the first opening to the conclusion of this long and interesting transaction, the providence of GOD suffered every thing to take its course; the malice and cruelty of Joseph's brethren, wrought the worst mischief against him;——banished him from his country and the protection of his parent.——The lust and baseness of disappointed woman sunk him still deeper;——loaded his character with an unjust reproach,——and, to complete his ruin, doomed him, friendless, to the miseries of a hopeless prison, where he lay neglected. Providence, though it did not cross these events,——yet providence bent them to the most merciful ends. When the whole DRAMA was opened,—then the wisdom and contrivance of every part of it was displayed. Then it appeared, it was not they (as the patriarch inferred, in consolation of his brethren), it was not they who sold him, but GOD;——it was He sent him thither before them;——his superintending power availed itself of their passions,——directed the operations of them,——held the chain in his hand, and turned and wound it to his own purpose. "Ye verily thought evil against me,—but GOD meant it for good;——ye had the guilt of a bad intention,——his providence the glory of accomplishing a good one,——by preserving *you a posterity upon the earth, and bringing to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.*" All history is full of such testimonies, which, tho' they may convince those who look no deeper than the surface of things,

that time and chance happen to all,——yet, to those who look deeper, they manifest, at the same time, that there is a hand much busier in human affairs than what we vainly calculate; which, tho' the projectors of this world overlook,——or at least make no allowance for, in the formation of their plans, they generally find it in the execution of them. And tho' the fatalist may urge, that every event is brought about by the ministry and chain of natural causes;——yet, in answer,—let him go one step higher——and consider,——whose power it is, that enables these causes to work,—whose knowledge it is that foresees what will be their effects,——whose goodness it is that is invisibly conducting them forwards to the best and greatest ends for the happiness of his creatures.

So that, as a great reasoner justly distinguishes upon this point——"It is not only religiously speaking, but with the strictest and most philosophical truth of expression, that the scripture tells us, *that* GOD *commandeth* the ravens:——that they are his directions, which the *winds and the seas obey*. If his servant hides himself by the brook, such an order of causes and effects shall be laid,——that the fowls of the air shall minister to his support.——When this resource fails, and his prophet is directed to go to Zarephath——for that he has *commanded* a widow woman there to sustain him,——the same hand which leads the prophet to the gate of the city——shall lead forth the distressed widow to the same place, to take him under her roof——and, tho' upon the impulse of a different occasion, shall nevertheless be made to fulfil his promise and intention of their mutual preservation."

Thus much for the truth and illustration of this great and fundamental doctrine of a providence; the belief of which is of such consequence to us, as to be the great support and comfort of our lives.

Justly, therefore, might the psalmist, upon thi declaration——that the Lord is King,——con clude, that the earth may be glad therefore, ye the multitude of the isles may be glad thereof.

May God grant, the persuasion may make u as virtuous, as it has reason to make us joyful and that it may bring forth in us the fruits o good living to his praise and glory: To whom b all might, majesty, and dominion, now and fo evermore. *Amen.*

SERMON. IX.

The Character of Herod.

PREACHED ON INNOCENTS DAY.

MATT. ii. 17, 18.

Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.

THE words which St. Matthew cites here, as fulfilled by the cruelty and ambition of Herod,—are in the 31st chapter of Jeremiah, 15th verse. In the foregoing chapter, the prophet having declared GOD's intention, of turning the mourning of his people into joy, by the restoration of the tribes which had been led away captive into Babylon; he proceeds, in the beginning of this chapter, which contains this prophecy, to give a more particular description of the great joy and festivity of that promised day, when they were to return once more to their own land, to enter upon their ancient possessions, and enjoy again all the privileges they had lost, and, amongst others, and what was above them all,—the favor and protection of GOD, and the continuation of his mercies to them and their posterity.

To make, therefore, the impression of this change the stronger upon their minds—he gives a very pathetic representation of the preceding sorrow on that day when they were first led away captive.

Thus saith the Lord, A voice was heard in Rama; lamentation and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted, because they were not.

To enter into the full sense and beauty of this description, it is to be remembered, that the tomb of Rachel, Jacob's beloved wife, as we read in the 35th of Genesis, was situated near Rama, and betwixt that place and Bethelem. Upon which circumstance, the prophet raises one of the most affecting scenes that could be conceived; for, as the tribes, in their sorrowful journey betwixt Rama and Bethlehem, in their way to Babylon, were supposed to pass by this monumental pillar of their ancestor Rachel, Jacob's wife,—the prophet, by a common liberty in rhetoric, introduces her as rising up out of her sepulchre, and, as the common mother of two of their tribes, weeping for her children, bewailing the sad catastrophe of her posterity led away into a strange land,——refusing to be comforted, because they were not,——lost and cut off from their country, and, in all likelihood, never to be restored back to her again.

The Jewish interpreters say upon this, that the patriarch Jacob buried Rachel in this very place, foreseeing, by the spirit of prophecy, that his posterity should that way be led captive, that she might, as they passed her, intercede for them—

But this fanciful superstructure upon the passage, seems to be little else than a mere dream of some of the Jewish Doctors; and indeed, had they not dreamed it when they did, it is great odds, but some of the Romish dreamers would have hit upon it before now. For as it favors the doctrine of intercessions—if there had not been undeniable vouchers for the real inventors of the conceit, one should much sooner have sought for it amongst the oral traditions of this church, than in the Talmud, where it is.

But this by the bye. There is still another interpretation of the words here cited by St. Matthew, which altogether excludes this scenical representation I have given of them.——By which

it is thought that the lamentation of Rachel, here described, has no immediate reference to Rachel, Jacob's wife ; but that it simply alludes to the sorrows of her descendants, the distressed mothers of the tribes of Benjamin and Ephraim, who might accompany their children, led into captivity, as far as Rama, in their way to Babylon, who wept and wailed upon this sad occasion, and, as the prophet describes them in the person of Rachel, refusing to be comforted for the loss of her children, looking upon their departure without hope or prospect of ever beholding a return.

Whichever of the two senses you give the words of the prophet, the application of them by the evangelist is equally just and faithful. For as the former scene he relates was transacted upon the very same stage,——in the same district of Bethlehem near Rama,——where so many mothers of the same tribe now suffered this second most affecting blow—the words of Jeremiah, as the evangelist observes, were literally accomplished ; and, no doubt, in that horrid day, a voice was heard again in Rama, lamentation and bitter weeping—Rachel weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted ;—every Bethlemitish mother involved in this calamity, beholding it with hopeless sorrow—give vent to it—each one bewailing her children, and lamenting the hardness of their lot, with the anguish of a heart as incapable of consolation, as they were of redress. Monster !—could no consideration of all this tender sorrow, stay thy hands ?—Could no reflection upon so much bitter lamentation throughout the coasts of Bethlehem, interpose and plead in behalf of so many wretched objects, as this tragedy would make ?—Was there no way open to ambition, but that thou must trample upon the affections of nature ?—Could no pity for the innocence of childhood—no sympathy for the yearnings of parental love,

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incline thee to some other measures for thy security—but thou must thus pitilessly rush in—take the victim by violence—tear it from the embraces of the mother—offer it up before her eyes—leave her disconsolate forever—broken-hearted with its loss—so affecting in itself——so circumstanced with horror, that no time, how friendly soever to the mournful——should ever be able to wear out the impression?

There is nothing in which the mind of man is more divided than in accounts of this horrid nature. For when we consider man, as fashioned by his Maker—innocent and upright—full of the tenderest dispositions—with a heart inclining him to kindness, and the love and protection of his species——this idea of him would almost shake the credit of such accounts;——so that, to clear them—we are forced to take a second view of man—very different from this favourable one, in which we insensibly represent him to our imaginations——that is——we are obliged to consider him—not as he was made——but as he is——a creature, by the violence and irregularity of his passions, capable of being perverted from all these friendly and benevolent propensities, and sometimes hurried into excesses so opposite to them, as to render the most unnatural and horrid accounts of what he does, but too probable.—The truth of this observation will be exemplified in the case before us. For, next to the faith and character of the historian who reports such facts,——the particular character of the person who committed them is to be considered as a voucher for their truth and credibility;—and if, upon inquiry, it appears that the man acted but consistent with himself,—and just as you would have expected from his principles,—the credit of the historian is restored,——and the fact related stands incontestible, from so strong and concurring an evi*dence on its* side.———

With this view, it may not be an unacceptable application of the remaining part of a discourse upon this day, to give you a sketch of the character of Herod, not as drawn from scripture,—for, in general, it furnishes us with few materials for such descriptions :—The sacred scripture cuts off, in a few words, the history of the ungodly, how great soever they were in the eyes of the world, and, on the other hand, dwells largely upon the smallest actions of the righteous.—We find all the circumstances of the lives of Abraham, Isaac ; Jacob, and Joseph, recorded in the minutest manner.——The wicked seem only mentioned with regret ;—just brought upon the stage, on purpose to be condemned. The use and advantage of which conduct, is, I suppose, the reason ;—as in general it enlarges on no character, but what is worthy of imitation. 'Tis however undeniable, that the lives of bad men are not without use ;—and whenever such an one is drawn, not with a corrupt view to be admired,—but on purpose to be detested,—it must excite such an horror against vice, as will strike indirectly the same good impression. And tho' it is painful in the last degree to paint a man in the shades which his vices have cast upon him, yet, when it serves this end, and at the same time illustrates a point in sacred history—it carries its own excuse with it.

This Herod, therefore, of whom the evangelist speaks, if you take a superficial view of his life, you would say was a compound of good and evil, that tho' he was certainly a bad man, yet you would think the mass was tempered at the same time with a mixture of good qualities. So that, in course, as it is not uncommon, he would appear with two characters very different from each other. If you looked upon the more favorable side, you would see a man of great address—popular in his behavior,—*generous*,—prince-like in his entertain

ments and expenses, and, in a word, set off w
all such virtue and showy properties, as bid h
for the countenance and approbation of the wo

View him in another light, he was an amb
ous, designing man,——suspicious of all
world,——rapacious,—implacable in his temp
—without sense of religion,—or feeling of hu
nity.——Now, in all such complex character
this,—the way the world usually judges, is,—
sum up the good and the bad against each ot
—deduct the lesser of these articles from the gr
er, and (as we do in passing other accounts) g
credit to the man for what remains upon the
lance. Now, tho' this seems a fair,—yet I fe
is often a fallacious reckoning,—which tho' it r
serve in many ordinary cases of private life,
will not hold good in the more notorious instan
of mens lives, especially when so complicated w
good and bad, as to exceed all common bou
and proportions. Not to be deceived in such ca
we must work by a different rule, which, th
may appear less candid—yet to make amends
am persuaded will bring us, in general, m
nearer to the thing we want,—which is truth.
way to which is, in all judgments of this kind
distinguish and carry in your eye the princi
and ruling passion which leads the characte
and separate that from the other parts of it,—
then take notice, how far his other qualities, goo
bad, are brought to serve and support that.
want of this distinction, we often think ourssel
inconsistent creatures, when we are the farth
from it, and all the variety of shapes and con
dictory appearances we put on, are in truth,
so many different attempts to gratify the sa
governing appetite.—

With this clew, let us endeavor to unravel t
character of Herod, as here given.

The first thing which strikes one in it, is ambition, an immoderate thirst, as well as jealousy of power:——How inconsistent soever in other parts, his character appears invariable in this, and every action of his life was true to it. From hence we may venture to conclude, that this was *his* ruling passion,—and that most, if not all the other wheels were put in motion by this first spring. Now let us consider how far this was the case in fact.

To begin with the worst part of him——I said, he was a man of no sense of religion, or at least no other sense of it, but that which served his turn;—for he is recorded to have built temples in Judea, and erected images in them for idolatrous worship,—not from a persuasion of doing right, for he was bred a Jew, and consequently taught to abhor all idolatry—but he was, in truth, sacrificing all his time to a sacred idol of his own, his ruling passion; for, if we may trust Josephus, his sole view in so gross a compliance was, to ingratiate himself with Augustus and the great men of Rome, from whom he held his power,——— With this he was greedy and rapacious:——How could he be otherwise, with so devouring an appetite as ambition to provide for?—He was jealous in his nature, and suspicious of all the world. Show me an ambitious man that is not so; for as such a man's hand, like Ishmael's, is against every man, he concludes, that every man's hand, in course, is against him.

Few men were ever guilty of more astonishing acts of cruelty——and yet the particular instances of them in Herod, were such as he was hurried into, by the alarms this waking passion perpetually gave him. He put the whole Sanadrim to the sword,—sparing neither age, or wisdom, or merit;——one cannot suppose, simply from an inclination to cruelty—no—they had opposed the *establishment of* his power at Jerusalem.

His own sons, two hopeful youths, he cut off by a public execution.—The worst men have natural affection—and such a stroke as this would run so contrary to the natural workings of it, that you are forced to suppose the impulse of some more violent inclination to overrule and conquer it. And so it was ; for the Jewish historian tells us, it was jealousy of power,—his darling object —of which he feared they would one day or other dispossess him.—Sufficient inducement to transport a man of such a temper into the bloodiest excesses.

Thus far this one fatal and extravagant passion, accounts for the dark side of Herod's character. This governing principle being first laid open, all his other bad actions follow in course, like so many symptomatic complaints from the same distemper.

Let us see, if this was not the case even of his virtues too.

At first sight, it seems a mystery—how a man, so black as Herod has been thus far described—should be able to support himself in the favor and friendship of so wise and penetrating a body of men, as the Roman senate, of whom he held his power. To counterbalance the weight of so bad and detested a character—and be able to bear it up, as Herod did,—one would think he must have been master of some great secret, worth inquiring after :—He was so. But that secret was no other than what appears on this reverse of his character. He was a person of great address—popular in his outward behavior ;—he was generous, prince-like in his entertainments and expenses. The world was then as corrupt, at least, as now—and Herod understood it—knew at what price it was to be bought—and what qualities would bid the highest for its good word and approbation.

And, in truth he judged this matter so well,—*that notwithstanding* the general odium and pre-

possession which arose against so hateful a character—in spite of all the ill impressions from so many repeated complaints of his cruelties and oppressions—he yet stemmed the torrent—and by the specious display of those popular virtues, bore himself up against it all his life. So that, at length, when he was summoned to Rome, to answer for his crimes——Josephus tells us—that by the mere magnificence of his expenses—and the apparent generosity of his behavior, he entirely confuted the whole charge—and so ingratiated himself with the Roman senate—and won the heart of Augustus——(as he had that of Anthony before) that he ever after had his favor and kindness; which I cannot mention, without adding—that it is an eternal stain upon the character and memory of Augustus, that he sold his countenance and protection to so bad a man, for so mean and base a consideration.

From this point of view, if we look back upon Herod—his best qualities will shrink into little room, and how glittering soever in appearance, when brought to this balance, are found wanting. And in truth, if we would not willingly be deceived in the value of any virtue, or set of virtues, in so complex a character——we must call them to this very account; examine whom they serve—what passion, and what principle they have for their master.—When this is understood, the whole clew is unravelled at once, and the character of Herod, as complicated as it is given us in history ——when thus analysed, is summed up in three words——*That he was a man of unbounded ambition, who stuck at nothing to gratify it;*——so that not only his vices were ministerial to his ruling passion, but his virtues too (if they deserve the name) were drawn in, and listed into the same service.

Thus much for the character of Herod,——the critical review of which has many obvious uses,

to which I may trust you, having time but to mention that particular one which first led me into this examination, namely, that all objections against the evangelist's account of this day's slaughter of the Bethlemitish infants——from the incredibility of so horrid an account—are silenced by this account of the man; since in this he acted but like himself, and just so as you would expect, in the same circumstances, from every man of so ambitious a head——and so bad a heart——Consider, what havoc ambition has made——how often the same tragedy has been acted upon larger theatres—where not only the innocence of childhood——or the grey hairs of the aged, have found no protection—but whole countries, without distinction, have been put to the sword; or what is as cruel, have been driven forth to nakedness and famine, to make way for new ones, under the guidance of this passion.—For a specimen of this, reflect upon the story related by Plutarch,—when, by order of the Roman senate, seventy populous cities were unawares sacked and destroyed at one prefixed hour, by P. Æmilius—by whom one hundred and fifty thousand unhappy people were driven in one day into captivity—to be sold to the highest bidder, to end their days in cruel labor and anguish. As astonishing as the account before us is, it vanishes into nothing, from such views; since it is plain from all history, that there is no wickedness too great for so unbounded a cause; and that the most horrid accounts in history are, as I said above, but too probable effects of it——

May God of his mercy defend mankind from future experiments of this kind——and grant, we may make a proper use of them, for the sake of Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

SERMON X.

Job's account of the Shortness and Troubles of Life, considered.

JOB XIV. 1, 2.

Man that is born of woman, is of few days, and full of trouble: He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down; he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not.

THERE is something in this reflection of holy Job's, upon the shortness of life, and instability of human affairs, so beautiful and truly sublime, that one might challenge the writings of the most celebrated orators of antiquity, to produce a specimen of eloquence, so noble and thoroughly affecting. Whether this effect be owing, in some measure, to the pathetic nature of the subject reflected on——or to the eastern manner of expression, in a style more exalted and suitable to so great a subject,—(or which is the more likely account) because they are properly the words of that Being, who first inspired man with language, and taught his mouth to utter,—who opened the lips of the dumb, and made the tongue of the infant eloquent; to which of these we are to refer the beauty and sublimity of this, as well as that of numberless other passages in holy writ, may not seem now material; but surely, without these helps, never man was better qualified to make just and noble reflections upon the shortness of human life, and instability of human affairs, than Job was, who had himself waded thro' such a sea of troubles, and in his passage had encountered many vicissitudes of storms and sun-shine, and by turns had felt both the extremes, of all the happiness, and all the wretchedness that mortal man is heir to.

The beginning of his days was crowned w every thing that ambition could wish for;—he v the greatest of all the men of the east—had lar and unbounded possessions, and no doubt enjoy all the comforts and advantages of life, which th could administer. Perhaps you will say a wise m might not be inclined to give a full loose to t kind of happiness, without some better secur for the support of it, than the mere possession such goods of fortune, which often slip from un us, and sometimes unaccountably make themsel wings, and fly away. But he had that security t for the hand of providence, which had thus protected, was still leading him forwards, and see ed engaged in the preservation and continuanc these blessings: God had set a hedge about h and about all that he had on every side; he l blessed all the works of his hands, and his substa increased every day. Indeed, even with this se rity, riches to him who hath *neither child nor brot* as the wise man observes, instead of a comf prove sometimes a sore travel and vexation.—T mind of man is not always satisfied with the r sonable assurance of its own enjoyments, but look forwards; and if it discovers some imagi ry void, the want of some beloved object to his place after him, will often disquiet itself vain, and say——"For whom do I labor, and "reave myself of rest?"

This bar to his happiness, God had likev taken away, in blessing him with a numerous spring of sons and daughters, the apparent in ritors of all his present happiness.——Pleasing flection! to think the blessings God has indul one's self in shall be handed and continued d to a man's own seed: How little does this di from a second enjoyment of them, to an affe onate parent? who naturally looks forward v as strong an interest upon his children, as if *was to live* over again in his own posterity.

What could be wanting to finish such a picture of a happy man?—Surely nothing except a virtuous disposition to give a relish to those blessings, and direct him to make a proper use of them.—He had that too; for he was a perfect and upright man—one that feared God, and eschewed evil.

In the midst of all this prosperity, which was as great as could well fall to the share of one man, whilst all the world looked gay, and smiled upon him, and every thing round him seemed to promise, if possible, an increase of happiness; in one instant—all is changed into sorrow and utter despair.—It pleases God, for wise purposes, to blast the fortunes of his house, and cut off the hopes of his posterity, and, in one mournful day, to bring this great prince from his palace down to the dunghill. His flocks and herds, in which consisted the abundance of his wealth, were part consumed by a fire from heaven, the remainder taken away by the sword of the enemy: His sons and daughters, whom it is natural to imagine, so good a man had so brought up in a sense of their joy and pleasure in their future lives;—natural prospect for a parent to look forwards at, to recompense him for the many cares and anxieties which their infancy had cost him!——these dear pledges of his future happiness were all, all snatched from him at one blow, just at the time that one might imagine they were beginning to be the comfort and delight of his old age, which most wanted such staves to lean on: And as circumstances add to an evil, so did they to this; for it fell out not only by a very calamitous accident, which was grievous enough in itself; but likewise upon the back of his other misfortunes, when he was ill prepared to bear such a shock; and, what would still add to it, it happened at an hour when he had least reason to expect it, when he would naturally think his children secure and out of the way of danger—"For whilst they

" were feasting and making merry in their eldest " brother's house, a great wind out of the wilder- " ness smote the four corners of the house, and it " fell upon them."

Such a concurrence of misfortunes is not the common lot of many; and yet there are instances of some who have undergone as severe trials, and bravely struggled under them,—perhaps by natural force of spirits, the advantages of health, and the cordial assistance of a friend;—and with these helps, what may not a man sustain?—But this was not Job's case; for scarce had these evils fallen upon him, when he was not only borne down with a grievous distemper, which afflicted him from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, but likewise his three friends, in whose kind consolations he might have found a medicine,—even the wife of his bosom, whose duty it was, with a gentle hand, to have softened all his sorrows,—instead of doing this, they cruelly insulted and became the reproachers of his integrity. O God! what is man when thou thus bruisest him, and makest his burden heavier, as his strength grows less? Who, that had found himself thus an example of the many chances and changes of this mortal life;—when he considered himself now stripped and left destitute of so many valuable blessings, which, the moment before thy providence had poured upon his head; when he reflected upon this gay delightsome structure, in appearance so strongly built, so pleasingly surrounded with every thing that could flatter his hopes and wishes, & beheld it all levelled with the ground in one moment, and the whole prospect vanish with it, like the inscription of an enchantment;—who, I say, that had seen and felt the shock of so sudden a revolution, would not have been furnished with just and beautiful reflections upon the occasion? and said with Job, in the words of the text, " That man that is born of a woman, is

"of few days, and full of misery;—that he com-
"eth forth like a flower, and is cut down; he
"fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not."

The words of the text are an epitome of the *natural* and *moral* vanity of man, and contain two distinct declarations concerning his state and condition in each respect.

First, That he is a creature of few days; and, secondly, that those days are full of trouble.

I shall make some reflections upon each of these in their order, and conclude with a practical lesson from the whole.

And, first, That he is of few days. The comparison which Job makes use of, That man cometh forth like a flower, is extremely beautiful, and more to the purpose than the most elaborate proof,—which, in truth, the subject will not easily admit of;—the shortness of life being a point so generally complained of in all ages since the flood, and so universally felt and acknowledged by the whole species, as to require no evidence beyond a similitude; the intent of which is, not so much to prove the fact as to illustrate and place it in such a light as to strike us, and bring the impression home to ourselves, in a more affecting manner.

Man comes forth, says Job, like a flower, and is cut down. He is sent into the world the fairest and noblest part of GOD's works,—fashioned after the image of his Creator, with respect to reason and the great faculties of the mind.—He cometh forth glorious as the flower of the field; as it surpasses the vegetable world in beauty, so does he the animal world in the glory and excellency of his nature.

The one—if no untimely accident oppress it, soon arrives at the full period of its perfection,—is suffered to triumph for a few moments, and is plucked up by the roots in the very pride and gayest stage of its being;—or if it happens to escape the hands of violence, in a few days it necessarily *sickens of itself*, and dies away.

Man likewise tho' his progress is slower, and his duration something longer, yet the periods of his growth and declension are nearly the same, both in the nature and manner of them.

If he escapes the dangers which threaten his tender years, he is got soon into the full maturity and strength of life; and if he is so fortunate as not to be hurried out of it then, by accidents, by his own folly and intemperance—if he escapes these, he naturally decays of himself;—a period comes fast upon him, beyond which he was not made to last. Like a flower of fruit which may be plucked up by force, before the time of their maturity, yet cannot be made to outgrow the period when they are to fade and drop of themselves; when that comes, the hand of nature then plucks them both off, and no art of the botanist can uphold the one, or skill of the physician preserve the other, beyond the periods to which their original frames and constitutions were made to extend. As God has appointed and determined the several growths and decays of the vegetable race, so he seems as evidently to have prescribed the same laws to man, as well as all living creatures, in the first rudiments of which, there are contained the specific powers of their growth, duration and extinction; and, when the evolutions of those animal powers are exhausted and run down, the creature expires and dies of itself, as ripe fruit falls from the tree, or a flower preserved beyond its bloom, drops and perishes upon his stalk.

Thus much for this comparison of Job's, which tho' it is very poetical, yet conveys a just idea of the thing referred to.—"That he fleeth also as a "shadow, and continueth not,"—is no less a faithful and fine representation of the shortness and vanity of human life; of which one cannot give a better explanation, than by referring to the original, from whence the picture was taken.—With

how quick a succession do days, months and years, pass over our heads? how truly like a shadow that departeth, do they flee away insensibly, and scarce leave an impression with us?—When we endeavor to call them back by reflection, and consider in what manner they have gone, how unable are the best of us to give a tolerable account!—and, were it not for some of the more remarkable stages which have distinguished a few periods of this rapid progress—we should look back upon it all, as Nebuchadnezzar did upon his dream, when he awoke in the morning;—he was sensible many things had passed, and troubled him too; but had passed on so quickly, they had left no footsteps behind, by which he could be enabled to trace them back. Melancholy account of the life of man! which generally runs on in such a manner, as scarce to allow time to make reflections which way it has gone.

How many of our first years slide by in the innocent sports of childhood, in which we are not able to make reflections upon them?—how many more thoughtless years escape us in our youth, when we are unwilling to do it, and are so eager in the pursuit of pleasure, as to have no time to spare, to stop and consider them?

When graver and riper years come on, and we begin to think it time to reform and set up for men of sense and conduct, then the business and perplexing interests of this world, and the endless plotting and contriving how to make the most of it, do so wholly employ us, that we are too busy to make reflections upon so unprofitable a subject.—As families and children increase, so do our affections, and with them are multiplied our cares and toils for their preservation and establishment;—all which take up our thoughts so closely, and possess them so long, that we are often *overtaken by grey hairs* before we see them, or

have found leisure to consider how far we were got,—what we have been doing,—and for what purpose GOD sent us into the world. As man may justly be said to be of few days, considered with respect to this hasty succession of things, which soon carries him into the decline of his life,—so may he likewise be said to flee like a shadow and continue not, when his duration is compared with other parts of GOD's works, and even the works of his own hands, which outlast him many generations;—whilst, as Homer observes, like leaves, one generation drops, and another springs up, to fall again, and be forgotten.

But, when we farther consider his days in the light in which we ought chiefly to view them, as they appear in thy sight, O GOD! with whom a thousand years are but as yesterday;—when we reflect that this hand-breadth of life is all that is measured out to us from that eternity for which he is created, how does his short span vanish to nothing in the comparison! It is true, the greatest portion of time will do the same, when compared with what is to come; and therefore, so short and transitory a one, as threescore years and ten, beyond which all is declared to be labor and sorrow, may the easier be allowed: And yet how uncertain are we of that portion, short as it is? Do not ten thousand accidents break off the slender thread of human life, long before it can be drawn out to that extent?—The new-born babe falls down an easy prey, and moulders back again into dust, like a tender blossom put forth in an untimely hour.——The hopeful youth, in the very pride and beauty of life, is cut off; some cruel distemper, or unthought-of accident, lays him prostrate upon the earth, to pursue Job's comparison, like a blooming flower, smit and shrivelled up with a malignant blast.—In this stage of life, chances multiply upon us,—the seeds of disor-

ders are sown by intemperance or neglect,—infectious distempers are more easily contracted,—when contracted they rage with greater violence, and the success in many cases is more doubtful, insomuch that they who have exercised themselves in computations of this kind, tell us, "That one "half of the whole species which are born into the "world, go out of it again, and are all dead in so "short a space as the first seventeen years."——

These reflections may be sufficient to illustrate the first part of Job's declaration, "*That man is of few days.*" Let us examine the truth of the other, and see, whether he is not likewise full of trouble.

And here we must not take our account from the flattering outside of things, which are generally set off with a glittering appearance enough, especially what is called *higher life*.—Nor can we safely trust the evidence of some of the more merry and thoughtless amongst us, who are so set upon the enjoyment of life, as seldom to reflect upon the troubles of it;—or who, perhaps, because they are not yet come to this portion of their inheritance, imagine it is not the common lot.—Nor lastly, are we to form an idea of it, from the delusive stories of a few of the most prosperous passengers, who have fortunately sailed thro' and escaped the rougher toils and distresses. But we are to take our account from a close survey of human life, and the real face of things, stripped of every thing that can palliate or gild it over. We must hear the general complaint of all ages, and read the histories of mankind. If we look into them, and examine them to the bottom, what do they contain but the history of sad and uncomfortable passages, which a good-natured man cannot read but with oppression of spirits?——Consider the dreadful succession of wars in one part or other of the earth, perpetuated from one century to another, *with so little* intermission, that man-

kind have scarce had time to breathe from them, since ambition first came into the world.—Consider the horrid effects of them in all those barbarous devastations we read of, where whole nations have been put to the sword, or have been driven out to nakedness and famine, to make room for new comers.——Consider how great a part of our species, in all ages down to this, have been trod under the feet of cruel and capricious tyrants, who would neither hear their cries, nor pity their distresses.——Consider slavery, ——what it is,—how bitter a draught, and how many millions have been made to drink of it ;—which, if it can poison all earthly happiness, when exercised barely upon our bodies, what must it be, when it comprehends both the slavery of body and mind ? To conceive this, look into the history of the Romish church and her tyrants, (or rather executioners), who seem to have taken pleasure in the pangs and convulsions of their fellow creatures.—Examine the inquisition ; hear the melancholy notes sounded in every cell.—Consider the anguish of mock trials, and the exquisite tortures consequent thereupon, mercilessly inflicted upon the unfortunate, where the racked and weary soul has so often wished to take its leave—but cruelly not suffered to depart.—Consider how many of these helpless wretches have been haled from thence, in all periods of this tyrannic usurpation, to undergo the massacres and flames to which a false and a bloody religion has condemned them.

If this sad history and detail of the more public causes of the misery of man, are not sufficient, let us behold him in another light, with respect to the more private causes of them, and see whether he is not full of trouble likewise there, and almost born to it, as naturally as the *sparks fly* upwards. If we consider man as a

creature full of wants and necessities, (whether real or imaginary), which he is not able to supply of himself ;—what a train of disappointments, vexations and dependencies, are to be seen issuing from thence, to perplex and make his being uneasy ?——How many jostlings and hard struggles do we undergo in making our way in the world ? —How barbarously held back ?—How often and basely overthrown, in aiming only at getting bread ?—How many of us never attain it—at least not comfortably,—but from various and unknown causes—eat it all their lives long in bitterness ?

If we shift the scene, and look upwards, towards those whose situation in life seems to place them above the sorrows of this kind, yet where are they exempt from others ?—Do not all ranks and conditions of men meet with sad accidents, and numberless calamities in other respects, which often make them go heavily all their lives long.

How many fall into chronical infirmities, which render both their days and nights restless and insupportable ?—How many of the highest rank are tore up with ambition, or soured with disappointments ?—and how many more, from a thousand secret causes of disquiet, pine away in silence, and owe their deaths to sorrow and dejection of heart ?—If we cast our eyes upon the lowest class and condition of life,—the scene is more melancholy still.—Millions of our fellow-creatures, born to no inheritance but poverty and trouble, forced, by the necessity of their lots, to drudgery and painful employments, and hard set with that too, to get enough to keep themselves and families alive.——So that, upon the whole, when we have examined the true state and condition of human life, and have made some allowances for a few fugacious, deceitful pleasures, there is scarce any thing to be found, which contradicts Job's description of it.—Whichever way

we look abroad, we see some legible characters of what GOD first denounced against us, "That in "sorrow we should eat our bread, till we return "to the ground, from whence we were taken*."

But some one will say, Why are we thus to be put out of love with human life? To what purpose is it to expose the dark sides of it to us, or enlarge upon the infirmities which are natural, and consequently out of our power to redress?

I answer that the subject is nevertheless of great importance, since it is necessary every creature should understand his present state and condition, to put him in mind of behaving suitably to it.—Does not an impartial survey of man—the holding up the glass to show him his defects and natural infirmities, naturally tend to cure his pride, and clothe him with humility, which is a dress that best becomes a short-lived and a wretched creature? Does not the consideration of the shortness of our life, convince us of the wisdom of dedicating so small a portion to the great purposes of eternity?

Lastly, when we reflect that this span of life, short as it is, is chequered with so many troubles, that there is nothing in this world springs up, or can be enjoyed without a mixture of sorrow;—how insensibly does it incline us to turn our eyes and affections from so gloomy a prospect, and fix them upon that happier country, where afflictions cannot follow us, and where GOD will wipe away all tears from off our faces, for ever and ever! *Amen.*

* N. B. *Most of these reflections upon the miseries of life, are taken from Woollaston.*

SERMON XI.

Evil Speaking,

JAMES i. 26.

If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, that man's religion is vain.

OF the many duties owing both to GOD and our neighbor, there are scarce any men so bad, as not to acquit themselves of some, and few so good, I fear, as to practise all.

Every man seems willing enough to compound the matter, and adopt so much of the system, as will least interfere with his principal and ruling passion; and for those parts, which would occasion a more troublesome opposition, to consider them as hard sayings, and so leave them for those to practise, whose natural tempers are better suited for the struggle. So that a man shall be covetous, oppressive, revengeful, neither a lover of truth, or common honesty, and yet, at the same time, shall be very religious, and so sanctified, as not once to fail of paying his morning and evening sacrifice to GOD. So, on the other hand, a man shall live without GOD in the world, have neither any great sense of religion, or indeed pretend to have any, and yet be of nicest honor, conscientiously just and fair in all his dealings. And here it is that men generally betray themselves, deceiving, as the apostle says, their own hearts: Of which the instances are so various, in one degree or other throughout human life, that one might safely say, the bulk of mankind live in such a contradiction to themselves, that there is no character so hard to be met with, as one, which,

upon a critical examination, will appear altogether uniform, and, in every point, consistent with itself.

If such a contrast was only observable in the different stages of a man's life, it would cease to be either a matter of wonder, or of just reproach. Age, experience, and much reflection, may naturally enough be supposed to alter a man's sense of things, and so entirely to transform him, that, not only in outward appearances, but, in the very cast and turn of his mind, he may be as unlike and different from the man he was twenty or thirty years ago, as he ever was from any thing of his own species. This, I say, is naturally to be accounted for, and, in some cases, might be praiseworthy too: But the observation is to be made of men in the same period of their lives, that in the same day, sometimes in the very same action, they are utterly inconsistent and irreconcileable with themselves.—Look at a man in one light, and he shall seem wise, penetrating, discreet, and brave: Behold him in another point of view, and you see a creature all over folly and indiscretion, weak and timorous, as cowardice and indiscretion can make him. A man shall appear gentle, courteous, and benevolent to all mankind; follow him into his own house, may be you see a tyrant, morose and savage to all whose happiness depends upon his kindness. A third, in his general behavior, is found to be generous, disinterested, humane and friendly:—Hear but the sad story of the friendless orphans, too credulously trusting all their little substance into his hands, and he shall appear more sordid, more pitiless and unjust, than the injured themselves have bitterness to paint him. Another shall be charitable to the poor, uncharitable in his censures and opinions of all the rest of the world besides;—temperate in his appetites, intemperate in his tongue; shall have

too much conscience and religion to cheat the man who trusts him, and perhaps, as far as the business of debtor and creditor extends, shall be just and scrupulous to the uttermost mite; yet, in matters of full as great concern, where he is to have the handling of the party's reputation and good name,—the dearest, the tenderest property the man has,—he will do him irreparable damage, and rob him there without measure or pity.

And this seems to be that particular piece of inconsistency and contradiction which the text is levelled at; in which the words seem so pointed, as if St. James had known more flagrant instances of this kind of delusion, than what had fallen under the observation of any of the rest of the apostles; he being more remarkably vehement and copious upon that subject than any other.

Doubtless some of his converts had been notoriously wicked and licentious, in this remorseless practise of defamation and evil-speaking. Perhaps the holy man, tho' spotless as an angel, (for no character is too sacred for calumny to blacken) had grievously suffered himself,—and, as his blessed Master foretold him, had been cruelly reviled and evil-*spoken* of.

All his labors in the gospel, his unaffected and perpetual solicitude, for the preservation of his flock, his watchings, his fastings, his poverty, his natural simplicity and innocence of life, *all*, perhaps, were not enough to defend him from this unruly weapon, so full of deadly poison. And, what, in all likelihood might move his sorrow and indignation more, some, who seemed the most devout and zealous of all his converts, were the most merciless and uncharitable in that respect; having a form of godliness, full of bitter envyings and strife.

With such it is that he expostulates so largely in the third chapter of his epistle; and there is

something in his vivacity, tempered with such affection and concern, as well suited the character of an inspired man. My brethren, says the apostle, these things ought not to be.—The wisdom that is from above, is pure, peaceable, gentle, full of mercy, without partiality, without hypocrisy. The wisdom from above—that heavenly religion which I have preached to you, is pure, alike and consitent with itself in all its parts; like its great Author, it is universally kind and benevolent in all cases and circumstances. Its first glad-tidings were peace upon earth, good-will towards men. Its chief corner-stone, its most distinguishing character, is love, that kind principle which brought it down,—in the pure exercise of which, consists the chief enjoyment of heaven, from whence it came. But this practice, my brethren, cometh not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish, full of confusion and every evil work. Reflect then a moment—Can a fountain send forth, at the same place, sweet water and bitter? Can the fig-tree, my brethren, bear olive-berries, either a vine, figs? Lay your hands upon your hearts, and let your consciences speak, —Ought not the same just principle which restrains you from cruelty and wrong in one case, equally to withhold you from it in another?—— Should not charity and good-will, like the principle of life, circulating thro' the smallest vessels in every member,—ought it not to operate as regularly upon you, throughout, as well upon your words, as upon your actions?

If a man is wise, and endowed with knowledge, let him show it, out of a good conversation, with meekness of wisdom. But—if any man amongst you seemeth to be religious——seemeth to be—for truly religious he cannot be,——and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain—This is the full force of

St. James's reasoning; upon which I have dwelt the more, it being the foundation upon which is grounded this clear decision of the matter left us in the text; in which the apostle seems to have set the two characters of a saint and a slanderer at such variance, that one would have thought they could never have had a heart to have met together again. But there are no alliances too strange for this world. How many may we observe every day, even of the gentler sex, as well as our own, who, without conviction of doing much wrong in the midst of a full career of calumny and defamation, rise up punctual at the stated hour of prayer, leave the cruel story half untold till they return, go, and kneel down before the throne of heaven, thank God that he had not made them like others, and that his Holy Spirit had enabled them to perform the duties of the day, in so Christian and conscientious a manner!

This delusive itch for slander, too common in all ranks of people, whether to gratify a little ungenerous resentment; whether, oftner, out of a principle of levelling, from a narrowness and poverty of soul, ever impatient of merit and superiority in others; whether, from a mean ambition, or the insatiate lust of being witty, (a talent in which ill-nature and malice are no ingredients); or, lastly, whether, from a natural cruelty of disposition, abstracted from all views and considerations of self: To which one, or whether to all jointly, we are indebted for this contagious malady; thus much is certain, from whatever seeds it springs, the growth and progress of it are as destructive to, as they are unbecoming a civilized people. To pass a hard and ill-natured reflection upon an undesigning action; to invent, or, which is equally bad, to propagate a vexatious report, without color and grounds; to plunder an innocent man of his character and good name, a jewel which,

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age.

But, whatever was the case when St.
wrote his epistle, we have been very succes
latter days, and have found out the art, by
per management of light and shade, to cor
all these vices together, so as to give bo
strength to the whole, whilst no one but a
ing artist is able to discover the labors t
in finishing the picture.—And indeed, lik
other bad originals in the world—it st
need of all the diguise it has.—For who c
enamored of a character, made up of so
some a compound,—could they behold it n
in its crooked and deformed shape,—with
natural and detested infirmities laid open
lic view ?

And therefore, it were to be wished, t
could do in this malignant case of the
what is generally done for the public gooc

more malignant and epidemical cases of the body,—that is,—when they are found infectious,—to write a history of the distemper, and ascertain all the symptoms of the malady,—so that every one might know whom he might venture to go near, with tolerable safety to himself.—But, alas! the symptoms of this appear in so many strange and contradictory shapes, and vary so wonderfully with the temper and habit of the patient, that they are not to be classed—or reduced to any one regular system.

Ten thousand are the vehicles in which this deadly poison is prepared and communicated to the world;—and by some artful hands, it is done by so subtle and nice an infusion, that it is not to be tasted or discovered, but by its effects.

How frequently is the honesty and integrity of a man disposed of by a smile and a shrug?—How many good and generous actions have been sunk into oblivion, by a distrustful look,—or stamped with the imputation of proceeding from bad motives by a mysterious and seasonable whisper?

Look into companies of those, whose gentle natures should disarm them,—we shall find no better account.——How large a portion of chastity is sent out of the world by distant hints,——nodded away, and cruelly winked into suspicion, by the envy of those, who are past all temptation of it themselves?——How often does the reputation of a helpless creature bleed by a report——which the party, who is at the pains to propagate it, beholds with much pity and fellow-feeling,——that she is heartily sorry for it——hopes in God it is not true——however, as archbishop Tillotson wittily observes upon it, is resolved, in the mean time, to give the report her pass, that, at least, it may have fair play to take its fortune in the world,——to be believed or not, according to the charity of those into whose hands it shall happen to fall?

So fruitful is this vice in variety of expedients, to satiate, as well as disguise itself. But if these smoother weapons cut so sore,——what shall we say of open and unblushing scandal——subjected to no caution—tied down to no restraints? If the one, like an arrow shot in the dark, does nevertheless so much secret mischief,———this, like the pestilence which rageth at noon-day, sweeps all before it, levelling without distinction, the good and the bad; a thousand fall beside it, and ten thousand on its right hand;——they fall——so rent and torn in this tender part of them, so unmercifully butchered, as sometimes never to recover, either of the wounds, or the anguish of heart—which they have occasioned.——

But there is nothing so bad, which will not admit of something to be said in its defence.

And here it may be asked,—Whether the inconveniencies and ill effects which the world feels —from the licentiousness of this practice,—are not sufficiently counterbalanced by the real influence it has upon mens lives and conduct?—— That if there was no evil-speaking in the world, thousands would be encouraged to do ill, and would rush into many indecorums, like a horse into the battle, were they sure to escape the tongues of men.

That if we take a general view of the world,—we shall find, that a great deal of virtue,—at least of the outward appearance of it, is not so much from any fixed principle, as the terror of what the world will say, and the liberty it will take upon the occasions we shall give.

That if we descend to particulars, numbers are every day taking more pains to be well spoken of, than what would actually enable them to live so as to deserve it.

That there are many, of both sexes, who can support life well enough without honor or chastity

ty, who without reputation, (which is but the opinion which the world has of the matter), would hide their heads in shame, and sink down in utter despair of happiness. No doubt the tongue is a weapon which does chastise many indecorums which the laws of men will not reach,—and keeps many in awe, whom conscience will not; and where the case is indisputably flagrant, the speaking of it in such words as it deserves, scarce comes within the prohibition.—In many cases, it is hard to express ourselves so, as to fix a distinction betwixt opposite characters,—and sometimes it may be as much a debt we owe to virtue, and as great a piece of justice to expose a vicious character, and paint it in its proper colors, as it is to speak well of the deserving, and describe his particular virtues. And indeed, when we inflict this punishment upon the bad, merely out of principle, and without indulgencies to any private passion of our own,—it is a case which happens so seldom, that one might venture to except it.

However, to those, who in this objection are really concerned for the cause of virtue, I cannot help recommending what would much more effectually serve her interest, and be a surer token of their zeal and attachment to her;—and that is,—in all such plain instances, where it seems to be a duty to fix a distinction betwixt the good and the bad,—to let their actions speak it instead of their words, or at least to let them both speak one language. We all of us talk so loud against vicious characters, and are so unanimous in our cry against them,—that an unexperienced man who only trusted his ears, would imagine the whole world was in an uproar about it, and that mankind were all associating together, to hunt vice utterly out of the world. Shift the scene,—and let him behold the reception which vice meets with,—he will see the conduct and behavior of

the world towards it, so opposite to their de
tions,—he will find all he heard, so contrac
by what he saw,—as to leave him in doubt ; w
of his senses he is to trust,—or in which o
two cases mankind were really in earnest.
their virtue enough in the world to make a
ral stand against this contradiction,—that
was every one who deserved to be ill-spoker
sure to be ill-looked on—too ; was it a c
consequence of the loss of a man's charac
to lose his friends,—to lose the advantages
birth and fortune,—and thenceforth be univ
ly shunned, universally slighted——

Was no quality a shelter against the in
rums of the other sex, but was every wo
without distinction,—who had justly forfeite
reputation, from that moment was she su
forfeit likewise all claim to civility and resp

Or, in a word—could it be established as
in our ceremonial, that wherever characte
either sex were become notorious,—it shou
deemed infamous, either to pay or receive a
from them, and that the door should be sh
gainst them in all public places, till they ha
tisfied the world, by giving testimony of a b
life—A few such plain and honest maxims,
fully put in practice,—would force us upon
degree of reformation. Till this is done, it
little that we have no mercy upon them wit
tongues, since they escape, without feeling
other inconvenience.

We all cry out, that the world is corrupt-
I fear, too justly ;—but we never reflect, wh
have to thank for it, and that it is our open
tenance of vice, which gives the lie to our pr
censures of it, which is its chief protectio
encouragement. To those, however, who
believe that evil-speaking is some terror to
doers, one may answer, as a great man has

upon the occasion,—that after all our exhortations against it, it is to be feared, that there will be evil-speaking enough left in the world to chastise the guilty, and we may safely trust them to an ill-natured world, that there will be no failure of justice upon this score. The passions of men are pretty severe executioners, and to them let us leave this ungrateful task,—and rather ourselves endeavor to cultivate that more friendly one, recommended by the apostle,—of letting all bitterness, and wrath, and clamor and evil-speaking, be put away from us,—of being kind to one another,—tender-hearted, forgiving one another even as GOD, for CHRIST'S sake, forgave us. *Amen.*

SERMON XII.

Joseph's History considered.

FORGIVENESS OF INJURIES.

GENESIS l. 15.

And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him.

THERE are few instances of the exercise of particular virtues, which seem harder to attain to, or which appear more amiable and engaging in themselves, than those of moderation, and the forgiveness of injuries: And when the temptations against them happen to be heightened by the bitterness of a provocation on the one hand, and the fairness of an opportunity to retaliate on the other, the instances *then* are truly great and heroic. The words of the text (which are the consultation of the sons of Jacob amongst themselves upon their father Israel's death, when, because it was in Joseph's power to revenge the deadly injury they had formerly done him, they concluded in course, that it was in his intention), will lead us to a beautiful example of this kind, in the character and behavior of Joseph consequent thereupon; and as it seems a perfect and very engaging pattern of forbearance, it may not be improper to make it serve for the ground-work of a discourse upon that subject. The whole transaction, from the first occasion given by Joseph in his youth, to this last act of remission, at the conclusion of his life, may be said to be a master-piece of history. There is, not only in the manner

throughout, such a happy, tho' uncommon mixture of simplicity and grandeur, which is a double character so hard to be united, that it is seldom to be met with in compositions merely human; but it is likewise related with the greatest variety of tender & affecting circumstances, which would afford matter for reflections useful for the conduct of almost every part and stage of a man's life. But as the words of the text, as well as the intention and compass of this discourse, particularly confine me to speak only to one point, namely, the forgiveness of injuries, it will be proper only to consider such circumstances of the story, as will place this instance of it in its just light; and then proceed to make a more general use of the great example of moderation and forbearance which it sets before us.

It seems strange, at first sight, that, after the sons of Jacob had fallen into Joseph's power,—when they were forced, by the soreness of the famine, to go down into Egypt to buy corn, and had found him too good a man even to expostulate with them for an injury, which he seemed then to have digested, and piously to have resolved into the overruling providence of GOD, for the preservation of much people,—how they could ever after question the uprightness of his intentions, or entertain the least suspicion that his reconciliation was dissembled. Would one have imagined, that the man who had discovered such a goodness of soul, that he sought where to weep, because he could not bear the struggles of a counterfeited harshness, could ever be suspected afterwards of intending a real one,——and that he only waited till their father Israel's death, to requite them all the evil which they had done unto him? What still adds to this difficulty, is, that his affectionate manner in making himself known to them;—his goodness in forbearing, not only to

reproach them for the injury they had former
done him, but extenuating and excusing the fa
to themselves,—his comforting and speaki
kindly to them, and seconding all with the te
derest marks of an undisguised forgiveness,
falling upon their necks, and weeping aloud, th
all the house of Pharaoh heard him ;——th
moreover, this behavior of Joseph could not a
pear to them to be the effect of any warm a
sudden transport, which might as suddenly gi
way to other reflections, but that it evidently spru
from a settled principle of uncommon generosi
in his nature, which was abov· the temptation
making use of an opportunity for revenge, whi
the course of God's providence had put into l
hands for better purposes ; and what might s
seem to confirm this, was the evidence, of his
tions to them afterwards, in bringing them, a
all their household, out of Canaan, and placi
them near him in the land of Goshen, the rich
part of Egypt, where they had so many years
perience of his love and kindness. And yet it
plain, that all this did not clear his motive fr
suspicion, or at least themselves from some
prehensions of a change in his conduct towa
them. And, was it not that the whole transacti
was wrote under the direction of the Spirit
truth, and that other historians concur in doi
justice to Joseph's character, and speak of him
a compassionate and merciful man, one would
apt you will say, to imagine here, that Mos
might possibly have omitted some circumstanc
of Joseph's behavior, which had alarmed his b
thren, betwixt the time of his first reconciliati
and that of their father's death. For they co
not be suspicious of his intentions without so
cause, and fear where no fear was.—But does
a guilty conscience often do so, and tho' it has
grounds, yet wants the power to think itself sa

And could we look into the hearts of those who know they deserve ill, we should find many an instance, where a kindness from an injured hand, where there was least reason to expect one, has struck deeper, and touched the heart with a degree of remorse and concern, which perhaps no severity or resentment could have reached. This reflection will in some measure help to explain this difficulty which occurs in the story. For it is observable, that when the injury they had done their brother was first committed, and the fact was fresh upon their minds, and most likely to have filled them with a sense of guilt, we find no acknowledgment or complaint to one another of such a load, as one might imagine it had laid upon them; and, from that event, through a long course of years to the time they had gone down to Egypt, we read not once of any sorrow or compunction of heart which they had felt during all that time, for what they had done. They had artfully imposed upon their parent—and (as men are ingenious casuists in their own affairs) they had probably, as artfully imposed upon their own consciences;—and possibly, had never impartially reflected upon the action, or considered it in its just light, till the many acts of their brother's love and kindness had brought it before them, with all the circumstances of aggravation which his behavior would naturally give it.———They then began maturely to consider what they had done——That they had first undeservedly hated him in his childhood, for that, which, if it was a ground of complaint, ought rather to have been charged upon the indiscretion of the parent, than considered as a fault in him,—That, upon a more just examination, and a better knowledge of their brother, they had wanted even that pretence:—It was not a blind partiality which seemed first to have directed their father's affection to him,——

tho' they then thought so; for, doubtless goodness and benevolence as shone fo nature, now that he was a man, could nc it so deep concealed in his youth, but th of a parent's eye would discover it; ar course, their enmity towards him, wa upon that which ought to have won the —That if he had incautiously added env ill-will, in reporting his dreams, which his future greatness; it was but the in of a youth unpractised in the world, wh yet found out the art of dissembling and expectations, and was scarce arrivec to comprehend there was such a thing in as envy and ambition.—That if such o a brother, so fairly carried their own exc them; what could they say for themsel they considered it was for this they h unanimously conspired to rob him of l and, tho' they were happily restrained f ding his blood, upon Reuben's remon that they had, nevertheless, all the guilt tention to answer for?—That whatever was, which then stayed their hands, the ences told them, it could not be a good they had changed the sentence for or cruel in itself, and what, to an ingenuo was worse than death, to be sold for a The one was common to all,—the othe the unfortunate.—That it was not cc which then took place; for, had there way open to that, his tears and entrea have found it, when they saw the angui soul, when he besought, and they would —That if aught still could heighten th of banishing a youth, without provoc ever from his country, and the protecti parent, to be exposed naked to the buf the world, and the rough hand of some

master, they would find it in this reflection, "That the many afflictions and hardships which they might naturally have expected would overtake the lad, consequent upon this action, had actually fallen upon him."

That, besides the anguish of suspected virtue, he had felt that of a prison, where he had long lain neglected in a friendless condition; and where the affliction of it was rendered still sharper, by the daily expectation of being remembered by Pharaoh's chief butler, and the disappointment of finding himself ungratefully forgotten.—And tho' Moses tells us, that he found favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison, yet the Psalmist acquaints us, that his sufferings were still grievous;—*that his feet were hurt with fetters*, and the iron entered *even into his soul.* And no doubt, his brethren thought the sense of their injury must have entered at the same time, and was then rivetted and fixed in his mind forever.

It is natural to imagine, they argued and reflected in this manner; and there seems no necessity of seeking for the reason of their uneasiness and distrust in Joseph's conduct, or any other external cause, since the inward workings of their own minds will easily account for the evil they apprehended.——A series of benefits and kindnesses from the man they had injured, gradually heightened the idea of their own guilt, till at length they could not conceive, how the trespass could be forgiven them;—it appeared with such fresh circumstances of aggravation, that, tho' they were convinced his resentment slept, yet they thought it only slept, and was likely, some time or other, to awake, and most probably then, that their father was dead, when the consideration of involving him in his revenge had ceased, and all the duty and compassion he owed to the grey hairs and happiness of a parent was discharged, and buried *with him.*

This they express in the consultation h
mong themselves, in the words of the text ;
in the following verse, we find them accor
sending to him, to deprecate the evil they
ed ; and either, because they thought their fa
name more powerful than their own, in th
plication—or rather, that they might not co
a fresh injury, in seeming to suspect his sinc
they pretend their father's direction ; for we
they sent messengers unto Joseph, saying,
father did command before he died, saying
shall we say unto Joseph,——" Forgive, I
thee, now, the trespass of thy brethren and
sin, for they did unto thee evil : And now, we
thee, forgive the trespass of the servants
God of thy father." The address was not wi
art, and was conceived in such words as seem
suggest an argument in their favor,—as if it
not become him, who was but a fellow serv
their father's God, to harbor revenge, or us
power their father's God had given him a
his children. Nor was there a reason in any
but the fears of a guilty conscience, to appr
it, as appears from the reception which th
dress met, which was such as bespoke an un
mon goodness of nature ; for when they thus
unto him,——the historian says, he wept.
pathy for the sorrow and distress of so
sons of his father, all in his power,——p
so open and ingenuous a confession of their
——concern and pity for the long punish
they must have endured by so stubborn a ren
which so many years seemed not to have dim
ed,—the affecting idea of their condition,
had seemed to reduce them to the necessi
holding up their hands for mercy, when the
lost their protector,——so many tender pas
struggling together at once, overcame him
he burst into tears, which spoke what no lan

could attempt. It will be needless, therefore, to enlarge any farther upon this incident, which furnishes us with so beautiful a picture of a compassionate and forgiving temper, that I think no words can heighten it;——but rather let us endeavor to find out by what helps and reasoning, the patriarch might be supposed to attain to so exalted and engaging a virtue. Perhaps you will say, "That one, so thoroughly convinced as Joseph seemed to be, of the overruling providence of God, which so evidently makes use of the malice and passions of men, and turns them as instruments in his hands to work his own righteousness, and bring about his eternal decrees,—and of which his own history was so plain an instance, could not have far to seek for an argument to forgiveness, or feel much struggle in stifling an inclination against it."—But let any man lay his hand upon his heart, and say, how often, in instances where anger and revenge had seized him, has this doctrine come in to his aid? ——In the bitterness of an affront, how often has it calmed his passions, and checked the fury of his resentment?——True and universally believed as the doctrine is amongst us, it seldom does this service, tho' so well suited for it, and like some wise statute, never executed or thought of, tho' in full force, lies as unheeded as if it was not in being.

It is plain it was otherwise in the present instance, where Joseph seems to acknowledge the influence it had upon him, in his declaration,—"That it was not they, but God who sent him." And does not this virtue shine the brightest in such a pious application of the persuasion to so benevolent a purpose?

Without derogating from the merit of his forbearance, he might be supposod to have cast an eye upon the change and uncertainty of human

affairs, which he had seen himself, and wh
convinced him we were all in one another
er by turns, and stand in need of one a
pity and compassion :——And that, to rest
cruelties, and stop the insolencies of m
sentments, GOD has so ordered it, in the
of his providence, that, very often in thi
——our revenges return upon our own hea
men's violent dealings upon their own pa

That besides these considerations,——
generously forgiving an enemy, he was th
friend to his own character, and shoul
more to it by such an instance of subdu
spirit, than if he had taken a city.——Th
know only how to forgive ;——it is the r
fined and generous pitch of virtue human
can arrive at.—*Cowards have done go
kind actions,—cowards have even fough
sometimes even conquered ;—but a cowar
forgave.——It is not in his nature ;—the
of doing it flows only from a strength an
ness of soul, conscious of its own force an
rity, and above the little temptations of re
every fruitless attempt to interrupt its hap
Moreover, setting aside all consideration
character,—in passing by an injury, he
truest friend likewise to his own happin
peace of mind ; he never felt that fretfu
of passions which hurry men on to acts
venge, or suffered those pangs of horror
pursue it.——Thus he might possibly arg
no farther ;—for want of a better foundat
better helps, he could raise the building n
er ;——to carry it upwards to its perfect
must call in to our aid that more spiritual
fined doctrine introduced upon it by C
namely, to forgive a brother, not only to

* *Christian hero.*

times, but to seventy times seven—that is, without limitation.

In this the excellency of the gospel is said, by some one, to appear to a remarkable advantage; "That a Christian is as much disposed to love and serve you, when your enemy, as the mere moral man can be when he is your friend."—— This, no doubt, is the tendency of his religion; —but how often, or in what degrees it succeeds, —how nearly the practice keeps pace with the theory, the all-wise Searcher into the hearts of men, alone is able to determine. But it is to be feared, that such great effects are not so sensibly felt, as a speculative man would expect from such powerful motives; and there is many a Christian society, which would be glad to compound amongst themselves for some lesser degrees of perfection on one hand, were they sure to be exempted, on the other, from the bad effects of those fretful passions, which are ever taking, as well as ever giving the occasions of strive: The beginnings of which, Solomon aptly compares to the letting out of waters; the opening a breach which no one can be sure to stop, till it has proceeded to the most fatal events.

With justice, therefore, might the son of Syrach conclude, concerning pride—that secret stream which administers to the overflowings of resentments,—that it was not made for man, nor furious anger for him that is born of a woman: That the one did not become his station, and that the other was destructive to all the happiness he was intended to receive from it. How miserably, then must those men turn tyrants against themselves, as well as others, who grow splenetic and revengeful, not only upon the little unavoidable oppositions and offences they must meet with in the commerce of the world, but upon those which only reach them by report; and accordingly tor-

ment their little souls with meditating h
turn the injury, before they are certain t
received one? Whether this eager sens
wrongs and resentment, arises from tha
cause to which the son of Syrach seems
all fierce anger and passion, or whether
tain sourness of temper, which stands in
dy's way, and therefore subject to be oft
—from whichever cause the disorder spr
advice of the author of the book of Eccle
is proper: "Admonish a friend, says h
be he hath not done it; and if he have, t
it not again. Admonish thy friend, it n
hath not said it; and if he have, that he
not again. There is that slippeth in hi
but not from his heart: And who is he,
not offended with his tongue?"

I cannot help taking notice, here, of a
species of forgiveness which is seldom en
thought of, and yet is no way below our r
I mean the forgiveness of those, if we ma
lowed the expression, whom we have inj
selves. One would think, that the diff
forgiving, could only rest on the side of l
has received the wrong; but the truth o
is often otherwise. The consciousness
provoked another's resentment, often ex
aggressor to keep before-hand with the
has hurt, and not only to hate him for th
expects in return, but even pursue him d
put it out of his power to make reprisals

The baseness of this is such, that it is
to make the same observation which w
upon the crime of parricide amongst t
cians:—It was so black,—their legisl
not suppose it could be committed, and
made no law to punish it.

SERMON XIII.

Duty of setting Bounds to our Desires.

2 KINGS, IV. 13.

And he said unto him, Say now unto her, Behold, thou hast been careful for us with all this care; what is to be done for thee? wouldest thou be spoken for to the king, or the captain of the host? And she answered, I dwell among mine own people.

THE first part of the text is the words which the prophet Elisha puts into the mouth of his servant Gehazi, as a message of thanks to the woman of Shunem, for her great kindness and hospitality, of which, after the acknowledgment of his just sense, which Gehazi is bid to deliver in the words——"Behold, thou hast been careful for us with all this care;"——he directs him to inquire in what manner he may best make a return in discharge of the obligation;——"What shall be done for thee? Wouldest thou be spoken for to the king, or the captain of the host?" The last part of the text is the Shunamite's answer, which implies a refusal of the honor or advantage which the prophet intended to bring upon her by such an application, which she indirectly expresses in her contentment and satisfaction with what she enjoyed in her present station: "I dwell among my own people." This instance of self-denial in the Shunamite, is but properly the introduction to her story, and gives rise to that long and very pathetic transaction which follows in the supernatural grant of a child, which GOD had many years denied her;——the affecting loss of him as soon as he was grown up,——and his restoration to life by Elisha, after he had been some time dead; the

whole of which, tho' extremely interesting, a from such incidents as would afford sufficient m ter for instruction, yet as it will not fall within t intention of this discourse, I shall beg leave this time, barely to consider these previous c cumstances of it, to which the text confines n upon which I shall enlarge with such reflections occur, and then proceed to that practical use a exhortation which will naturally fall from it.

We find that after Elisha had rescued the d tressed widow and her two sons from the hands the creditor, by the miraculous multiplication her oil; that he passed on to Shunem, whe we read, was a great woman, and she constrain him to eat bread; and so it was, that as often he passed by, he turned in thither to eat bre The sacred historian speaks barely of her tempo condition and station in life,——"That she w a great woman," but describes not the more n terial part of her, her virtues and character, l cause they were more evidently to be discover from the transaction itself, from which it appea that she was not only wealthy, but likewise cl ritable, and of a very considerate turn of mind. For, after many repeated invitations and ent tainments at her house, finding his occasions ca ed him to a frequent passage that way;—s moves her husband to set up and furnish a loc ing for him, with all the conveniencies which t simplicity of those times required: "And s said unto her husband, Behold now, I perceive tl this is an holy man of God, which passeth by continually; let us make him a little chamber, pray thee, on the wall, and let us set for him the a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestic and it shall be when he cometh to us, that shall turn in thither."——She perceived he wa holy man;—she had many opportunities, as passed by them continually, of observing his l

havior and deportment, which she had carefully remarked, and saw plainly what he was. The sanctity and simplicity of his manners,——the severity of his life,——his zeal for the religion of his God, and the uncommon fervency of his devotion, when he worshipped before him, which seemed his whole business and employment upon earth ;——all bespoke him, not a man of this world, but one whose heart and affections were fixed upon another object, which was dearer and more important to him. But, as such outward appearances may, and often have, been counterfeited, so that the actions of a man are certainly the only interpreters to be relied on, whether such colors are true or false ;—so she had heard that all was of a piece there, and that he was throughout consistent : That he had never, in any one instance of his life, acted as if he had any views in the affairs of this world, in which he had never interested himself at all, but where the glory of his God, or the good and preservation of his fellow-creatures at first inclined him :——That, in a late instance, before he came to Shunem, he had done one of the kindest and most charitable actions that a good man could have done, in assisting the widow and the fatherless ;——and, as the fact was singular, and had just happened before her knowledge of him, no doubt, she had heard the story with all the tender circumstances which a true report would give it in his favor, namely, That a certain woman, whose husband was lately dead, and had left her with her children in a very helpless condition——very destitute—and, what was still worse, charged with a debt she was not able to pay ;——that her creditor bore exceeding hard upon her, and finding her little worth in substance, was coming to take the advantage which the law allowed, of seizing her two sons for his bondsmen ;—so that she had not only lost her husband, which had made her

miserable enough already, but was going to be bereaved of her children, which were the only comfort and support of her life :—That upon her coming to Elisha with this sad story, he was touched with compassion for her misfortunes, and had used all the power and interest which he had with his GOD to relieve and befriend her, which, in an unheard of manner, by the miraculous increase of her oil, which was the only substance she had left, he had so bountifully effected, as not only to disentangle her from her difficulties in paying the debt, but withal, what was still more generous, to enable her to live comfortably the remainder of her days. She considered, that charity and compassion was so leading a virtue, and had such an influence upon every other part of a man's character, as to be a sufficient proof, by itself, of the inward disposition and goodness of the heart; but that so engaging an instance of it as this, exercised in so kind and seasonable a manner, was a demonstration of his,—and that he was, in truth, what outward circumstances bespoke, a holy man of GOD. As the Shunamite's principle and motive for her hospitality to Elisha, was just,—as it sprung from an idea of the worth and merit of her guest, so likewise was the manner of doing it kind and considerate. It is observable, she does not solicit her husband to assign him an apartment in her own house, but to build him a chamber on the wall apart,——she considered,—that true piety wanted no witnesses, and was always most at ease when most private; ——that the tumult and distraction of a large family were not fit for the silent meditations of so holy a man, who would perpetually there meet with something either to interrupt his devotion, or offend the purity of his manners :—That moreover, under such an independent roof, where he could take shelter as often as his occasions requir-

thought he might taste the pleasure which
ural to man, in possessing something like
: could call his own,—and, what is no
art of conferring a favor, he would scarce
weight of it, or at least much seldomer
manner, than where a daily invitation and
on of the kindness perpetually put him in
his obligation. If any thing could still
his—it was—that it did not appear to be
offer of a faint civility, but that it came
from the heart. There is a nicety in
minds, which will not accept of a cold and
ed offer,—and, even when it appears to be
and truly meant, there is a modesty in
rit which knows not how to accept it; and,
t, she had one, if not both these difficulties,
ier in their turns. For we read that, she
ned him, and, in all likelihood, forced his
nce of it, with all the warmth and friend-
ness of an humane and hospitable temper.
with benefits as with injuries, in this re-
hat we do not so much weigh the acciden-
d or evil they do us, as that which they
signed to do us;—that is, we consider no
them so much as their intention. And
phet's behavior consequent upon this,
he beheld it thro' this medium, or in some
vantageous light as I have placed it.
e is no burden so heavy to a grateful mind,
ot of kindness unpaid;——and we may be-
lisha felt it so, from the earnest desire
ie had, upon the immediate receipt of this,
large himself of it, which he expresses in
, in the warmest manner;——"Behold,
st been careful for us with all this care:
t shall be done for thee?—wouldest thou
en for to the king, or the captain of the
—There is a degree of honest impatience
words, such as was natural to a good man,

who would not be behind-hand with his benefactor. —But there is one thing, which may seem strange at first sight, that, as her station and condition in life were such, that she appeared rather to have abounded already, than stood in want of any thing in this world, which such an application could supply,—why the prophet should not rather have proposed some spiritual advantage, which as it would have better become the sanctity of his character on the one hand, so, on the other, it would have done a more real and lasting service to his friend.

But we are to reflect, that in returning favors we act differently from what we do in conferring them:——In the one case, we simply consider what is best,—in the other, what is most acceptable. The reason is, that we have a right to act according to our own ideas of what will do the party most good, in the case where we bestow a favor;—but, where we return one, we lose this right, and act according to his conceptions who has obliged us, and endeavor to repay in such manner as we think is most likely to be accepted in discharge of the obligation. So that, tho' we are not to imagine Elisha could be wanting in religious duties, as well as wishes to so hospitable a friend we may yet suppose, he was directed here by the principle of equity,—and that, in reflecting in what manner he should requite his benefactress he has considered, that, to one of her affluent condition who had all the reasonable comforts of an independent life,—if there was any passion yet unsatisfied, it must certainly be ambition: That tho in general, it was an irregular appetite, which, in most cases, it was dangerous to gratify, yet in effect it was only so far criminal, as the power which it acquired was perverted to bad and vicious purposes, which it was not likely to be here, from the specimen she had already given of her disposition

which showed, that, if she did wish for an increase of wealth and honor, she wished it only as it would enable her more generously to extend her arm in kind offices, and increase the power, as well as the opportunities, of doing good.

In justice to Elisha's motive, which must have been good, we must suppose, he considered his offer in this light; and what principally led him to propose it, was the great interest which he had with the king of Israel at that time, which he had merited by a signal service; and, as he had no views for himself, he thought it could not be employed so well as in establishing the fortune of one, whose virtue might be so safely trusted with it. It was a justifiable prepossession in her favor, —tho' one not always to be relied on; for, there is many one, who, in a moderate station, and with a lesser degree of power, has behaved with honor and unblemished reputation, and who has even borne the buffetings of adverse fortune well, and manifested great presence and strength of mind under it, whom, nevertheless, a high exaltation has at once overcome, and so entirely changed, as if the party had left, not only his virtue, but even himself behind him.

Whether the Shunamite dreaded to make this dangerous experiment of herself,——or, which is more likely, that she had learned to set bounds to her desires, and was too well satisfied with her present condition, to be tempted out of it, she declines the offer, in the close of the text,—"I *dwell* among mine own *people*;"—as if she had said, "The intended kindness is far from being small; but it is not useful to me; I live here, as thou art a witness, in peace, in a contented obscurity;——not so high as to provoke envy, nor so low as to be trodden down and despised. In this safe and middle state, as I have lived amongst my own people, so let me die, out of the reach,

both of the cares and glories of the world.—It is fit, O holy man of God! that I learn, some time or other, to set bounds to my desires; and if I cannot fix them now, when I have already more than my wants require, when shall I hope to do it?—Or, how should I expect, that even this increase of honor or fortune would fully satisfy and content my ambition, should I now give way to it?"

So engaging an instance of unaffected moderation and self-denial, deserves well to be considered by the bustlers in this world;——because, if we are to trust the face and course of things, we scarce see any virtue so hard to be put in practice, and which the generality of mankind seem so unwilling to learn, as this, of knowing when they have enough, and when it is time to give over their worldly pursuits,——Aye! but nothing is more easy, you will answer, than to fix this point, and set certain bounds to it——"For my own part, you will say, I declare, I want and would wish no more, but a sufficient competency of those things which are requisite to the real uses and occasions of life, suitable to the way I have been taught to expect from use and education."—But recollect how seldom it ever happens, when these points are secured, but that new occasions and new necessities present themselves, and, every day as you grow richer, fresh wants are discovered, which rise up before you, as you ascend the hill; so that every step you take—every accession to your fortune, sets your desires one degree farther from rest and satisfaction:—That something you have not yet grasped, and possibly, never shall,—the devil of a phantom, unpossessed and unpossessable, is perpetually haunting you, and stepping in betwixt you and your contentment.——Unhappy creature! to think of enjoying that blessing without moderation!—or imagine that so sacred a temple can be raised upon the foundation of wealth

or power!——If the ground-work is not laid within your own mind, they will as soon add a cubit to your stature, as to your happiness.—To be convinced it is so, pray look up to those who have got as high as their warmest wishes could carry them in this ascent;—do you observe they live the better, the longer, the merrier,—or that they sleep the sounder in their beds, for having twice as much as they wanted, or well know how to dispose of?—Of all rules for calculating happiness, this is the most deceitful, and which, few but weak minds, and those unpractised in the world, too, ever think of applying as the measure in such an estimation. Great and inexpressible may be the happiness, which a moderate fortune, and moderate desires, which a consciousness of virtue will secure. Many are the silent pleasures of the honest peasant, who rises cheerful to his labor;—why should they not?—Look into his house, the seat of each man's happiness;—has he not the same domestic endearments,—the same joy and comfort in his children, and as flattering hopes of their doing well, to enliven his hours, and glad his heart, as you could conceive in the highest station?—And I make no doubt, in general, but if the true state of his joy and sufferings could be fairly balanced with those of his betters, whether any thing would appear at the foot of the account, but what would recommend the moral of this discourse.—This, I own, is not to be attained to, by the cynical stale trick of harranguing against the goods of fortune;—they were never intended to be talked out of the world,—but, as virtue and true wisdom lie in the middle of extremes,—on one hand, not to neglect and despise riches, so as to forget ourselves, and on the other, not to pursue and love them, so as to forget GOD;—to have them sometimes in our heads,—but always something more important in our hearts.

SERMON XIV.

Self-Examination.

ISAIAH, i. 3.

The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass hi
crib,—but Israel doeth not know,—my p
not consider.

IT is a severe but an affectionate re
the prophet's laid against the Israe
which may safely be applied to every hee
unthankful people, who are neither won
mercies, nor terrified by his punishmen
is a giddy, thoughtless, intemperate sp
forth into the world, which possesses the
ty of mankind;—and the reason the wo
done, is, because the world does not co
considers neither awful regard to Go
true relation themselves bear to him.-
they consider this, and learn to weigh th
and compare the consequences of thing
exercise the reason which God has pu
for the government and direction of ou
there would be some hopes of a reforma
as the world goes, there is no leisure fo
quiries—and, so full are our minds of othe
that we have no time to ask, or a heart t
the questions we ought to put to oursel

Whatever our condition is, it is good
quainted with it in time, to be able
what is wanting, and examine the sta
accounts, before we come to give them
impartial judge.

The most inconsiderate see the reaso
of this——there being few, I believe,
thoughtless, or even so bad, but that th
times enter upon this duty, and have s
intervals of self-examination, which the
ged upon, if from no other motive, yet

free themselves from the load and oppression of spirits they must necessarily be subject to without it. But as the scripture frequently intimates,—and observation confirms it daily,—that there are many mistakes attending the discharge of this duty,—I cannot make the remainder of this discourse more useful, than by a short inquiry into them. I shall therefore, first beg leave to remind you of some of the many unhappy ways by which we often set about this irksome task of examining our works, without being either the better or the wiser for the employment.

And first, then, let us begin with that which is the foundation of almost all the other false measures we take in this matter,—that is, the setting about the examination of our works, before we are prepared with honest dispositions to amend them. This is beginning the work at the wrong end. These previous dispositions in the heart, are the wheels that should make this work go easily and successfully forwards;—and, to take them off, and proceed without them, it is no miracle, if, like Pharaoh's chariots, they that drive them —drive them heavily along.

Besides, if a man is not sincerely inclined to reform his faults—it is not likely he should be inclined to see them,—nor will all the weekly preparations that ever were wrote, bring him nearer the point;—so that, with how serious a face soever he begins to examine,—he no longer does the office of inquirer,—but an apologist, whose business is not to search for truth,—but skilfully to hide it. So long, therefore, as this pre-engagement lasts betwixt the man and his old habits,—there is little prospect of proving his works to any good purpose—of whatever kind they are, with so strong an interest and power on their side.—As in other trials, so in this, it is no wonder if the evidence is puzzled and confounded, and the several

facts and circumstances so twisted from their natural shapes, and the whole proof so altered and confirmed on the other side,—as to leave the last state of that man even worse than the first.

A second unhappy, tho' general mistake, in this great duty of proving our works,—is that which the apostle hints at; in the doing it, not by a direct examination of our own actions, but from a comparative view of them, with the lives and actions of other men.

When a man is going to enter upon this work of self-examination,—there is nothing so common, as to see him look *round* him—instead of looking *within* him. He looks round,—finds out some one who is more malicious,—sees another that is more covetous,—a third that is more proud and imperious than himself,—and so indirectly forms a judgment of himself, not from a review of his life, and a proving of his own works, as the apostle directs him, but rather from proving the works of others, and, from their infirmities and defects, drawing a deceitful conclusion in favor of himself. In all competitions of this kind, one may venture to say, there will be ever so much of self-love in a man, as to draw a flattering likeness of one of the parties,—and it is well—if he has not so much malignity too, as to give but a coarse picture of the other,—finished with so many hard strokes, as to make the one as unlike its original as the other.

Thus the Pharisee when he entered the temple, —no sooner saw the publican, but that moment he formed the idea to himself of all the vices and corruptions that could possibly enter into the man's character,—and with great dexterity stated all his own virtues and good qualities over-against them,—his abstinence and frequent fastings, exactness in the debts and ceremonies of the law;—not balancing the account, as he ought to have done, in this manner—What! tho' this man is a

publican and a sinner, have not I my vices as well as he? It is true, his particular office exposes him to many temptations of committing extortion and injustice;—but then—am not I a devourer of widows houses, and guilty of one of the most cruel instances of the same crime? He possibly is a profane person, and may set religion at nought; but do not I myself, for a pretence, make long prayers, and bring the greatest of all scandals upon religion, by making it the cloak to my ambition and worldly views? If he, lastly, is debauched or intemperate; am not I conscious of as corrupt and wanton dispositions,—and that a fair and guarded outside is my best pretence to the opposite character?

If a man will examine his works by a comparative view of them with others;—this, no doubt, would be the fairer way, and least likely to mislead him. But as this is seldom the method this trial is gone thro', in fact, it generally turns out to be as treacherous and delusive to the man himself, as it is uncandid to the man who is dragged into the comparison; and whoever judges of himself by this rule, so long as there is no scarcity of vicious characters in the world,—it is to be feared, he will often take the occasions of triumph and rejoicing, where, in truth, he ought rather to be sorry and ashamed.

A third error, in the manner of proving our works, is what we are guilty of, when we leave out of the calculation the only material parts of them;——I mean, the motives, and first principles, from whence they proceed. There is many a fair instance of generosity, chastity, and self-denial, which the world may give a man the credit of,—which, if he would give himself the leisure to reflect upon, and trace back to their first springs—he would be conscious, proceeded from such views and intentions, as, if known, would not be to his

honor. The truth of this may be made evident by a thousand instances in life;—and yet there is nothing more usual, than for a man, when he is going upon this duty of self-examination,—instead of calling his own ways to remembrance,—to close the whole inquiry at once, with this short challenge, "*That he defies the world to say ill of him.*" If the world has no express evidence, this indeed may be an argument of his good luck,—but no satisfactory one of the real goodness and innocence of his life. A man may be a very bad man,—and yet, thro' caution,—thro' deep-laid policy and design, may so guard all outward appearances, as never to want this negative testimony on his side, *that the world knows no evil of him*,—how little soever he deserves it. Of all assays upon a man's self, this may be said to be the slightest; This method of proving the goodness of our works—differing but little in kind from that unhappy one, which many unwary people take in proving the goodness of their coin——who, if it happens to be suspicious, instead of bringing it either to the balance or the touch-stone to try its worth,—they ignorantly go forth,—try if they can pass it upon the world:——If so, all is well, and they are saved all the expense and pains of inquiring after, and detecting the cheat.

A fourth error, in this duty of examination of mens works,——is that of committing the task to others;—an error into which thousands of well-meaning creatures are ensnared in the Romish church, by her doctrines of auricular confession, of works of supererogation, and the many lucrative practices raised upon that capital stock; the trade of which is carried to such a height in popish countries, that if you was at Rome or Naples now, and was disposed, in compliance with the apostle's exhortation in the text, to set about this duty, to prove your *own* works,—it is great odds

whether you will be suffered to do it yourself, without interruption; and you might be said to have escaped well, if the first person you consulted upon it, did not talk you out of your resolution, and possibly your senses too, at the same time. Prove your works!——for heaven's sake desist from so rash an undertaking;——what!—trust your own skill and judgment in a matter of so much difficulty and importance—when there are so many whose business it is,—who understand it so well, and who can do it for you with so much safety and advantage?

If your works must be proved, you would be advised, by all means, to send them to undergo this operation with some one who knows what he is about,—either some expert and noted confessor of the church,—or to some convent or religious society, who are in possession of a large stock of good works of all kinds, wrought up by saints and confessors, where you may suit yourself,—and either get the defects of your own supplied,——or be accommodated with new ones, ready proved to your hands, sealed and certified to be so by the pope's commissary, & the notaries of his ecclesiastic court. There needs little more to lay open this fatal error, than barely to represent it. So I shall only add a short remark,—that they who are persuaded to be thus virtuous by proxy, and will prove the goodness of their works only by deputies,—will have no reason to complain against God's justice, if he suffer them to go to heaven only in the same manner, that is, by deputies too.

The last mistake which I shall have time to mention, is that which the Methodists have revived; for it is no new error, but one which has misled thousands before these days, wherever enthusiasm had got footing, and that is, the attempting to prove their works by that very argument which

is the greatest proof of their weakness an perstition : I mean, that extraordinary im and intercourse with the spirit of God which pretend to, and whose operations (if you them) are so sensibly felt in their hearts souls, as to render, at once, all other proc their works needless to themselves. This I is one of the most summary ways of proce in this duty of self-examination ; and as it p a man's works in the gross, it saves him a of sober thought and inquiry after many ve ous particulars.

Indeed, if the premises were true, the infe is direct. For, when a man dreams of thes ward workings, and wakes with the impressi them strong upon his brain ; it is not stran should think himself a chosen vessel, sanc within, and sealed up into the perfect day demption ; and, so long as such a one is led tive to this error, there is nothing in natu induce him to this duty of examining his works in the sense of the prophet : For, hov bad they are, so long as his credulity and e siasm equal them, it is impossible they shoul turb his conscience, or frighten him into formation. These are some of the unhappy takes in the many methods this work is set a which in a great measure rob us of the frui expected, and sometimes so entirely blast t that we are neither the better or wiser for a pains we have taken.

There are many other false steps which le the same way ; but the delineation of these, ever, may serve at present, not only as so land-marks to guard us from this dangerous which I have described, but to direct us lik into that safe one, where we can only expec reward the gospel promises. For if, accordi the first recited causes, a man fails in exam

his works, from a disinclination to reform them, from partiality of comparisons, from flattery to his own motives, and a vain dependance upon the opinion of the world; the conclusion is unavoidable, that he must search for the qualities the most opposite to these for his conductors; and, if he hopes to discharge this work so as to have advantage from it, that he must set out upon the principles of an honest head, willing to reform itself, and attached principally to that object, without regard to the spiritual condition of others, or the misguided opinions which the world may have of himself.

That, for this end, he must call his own ways to remembrance, and search out his spirit;—search his actions with the same critical exactness, and the same piercing curiosity, we are wont to sit in judgment upon others; varnishing nothing, and disguising nothing. If he proceeds thus, and in every relation of life takes a full view of himself without prejudice, traces his actions to their principles without mercy, and looks into the dark corners and recesses of his heart without fear—and if, upon such an inquiry—he acts consistent with his view in it, by reforming his errors, separating the dross, and purifying the whole mass with repentance; this will bid fair for examining a man's works in the apostle's sense:—And whoever discharges the duty thus, with a view to scripture, which is the rule in this case—and to reason which is the applier of this rule in all cases—need not fear but he will have what the prophet calls *rejoicing in himself*, and that he will lay the foundation of his peace and comfort where it ought to lie—that is, within himself—in the testimony of a good conscience, and the joyful expectation, that having done his utmost to examine his *own* works here, that GOD will accept them hereafter, thro' the merits of CHRIST; which GOD grant. *Amen.*

SERMON XV.

Job's Expostulation with his Wife.

JOB ii. 10.

What! shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil also?—

THESE are the words of Job, uttered in the depth of his misfortunes by way of reproof to his wife, for the counsel we find she hath given him in the foregoing verse; namely, not to retain his integrity any longer, but to *curse God and die*. Tho' it is not very evident, what was particularly meant and implied in the words—"Curse God and die,"—yet it is certain, from Job's reply to them, that they directed him to some step which was rash and unwarrantable, and probably, as it is generally explained, meant, that he should openly call GOD's justice to an account, and, by a blasphemous accusation of it, provoke GOD to destroy his being; as if she had said, After so many sad things which have befallen thee, notwithstanding thy integrity, what gainest thou by serving GOD seeing he bears thus hard upon thee, as tho' thou wast his enemy? Ought so faithful a servant as thou hast been, to receive so unkind treatment at his hands,—and tamely to submit to it?—patiently to sustain the evils he has brought upon thy house, and neither murmur with thy lips, nor charge him with injustice?—Bear it not thus;—and, as thy piety could not at first protect thee from such misfortunes, nor thy behavior under them could since move GOD to take pity on thee, change thy conduct towards him—boldly expostulate with him—upbraid him openly with unkindness—call his justice and providence to an account, for oppressing thee in so undeserved manner,—and get that benefit by provoking him which thou hast not been able to obtain by serving him; to die at once by his hands, and be free at least, from the greater misery of a lingering *and a more* tormenting death.

On the other hand, some interpreters tell us,—hat the word *curse*, in the origininal, is equivocal, nd does more literally signify here, to bless, than o blaspheme ; and consequently, that the whole s rather to be considered as a sarcastical scoff at ob's piety. As if it had been said,—Go to, bless od, and die ; since thou are so ready to praise im in troubles, as thou hast done, go on in thy wn way, and see how God will reward thee, by miserable death which thou canst not avoid.

Without disputing the merit of these two interetations, it may not seem an improbable conjecre, that the words imply something still differt from what is expressed in either of them :—d instead of supposing them as an incitement to aspheme God, which was madness,—or that they ere intended as an insult, which was unnatural ; at her advice, to curse God and die, was meant ere, that he should resolve upon a voluntary ath himself, which was an act not only in his wn power, but what carried some appearance of remedy with it, and promised, at least at first ght, some respite from pain, as it would put an nd, both to his life and his misfortunes together.

One may suppose, that with all the concern and ffection which was natural, she beheld her lord flicted both with poverty and sickness ;—by one udden blow brought down from his palace to the unghill.—In one mournful day, she saw, that not nly the fortunes of his house were blasted, but likeise the hopes of his posterity cut off for ever by le untimely loss of his children. She knew he as a virtuous and an upright man, and deserved better fate ;—her heart bled the more for him ; —she saw the prospect before him was dreadful, —that there appeared no possible means which uld retrieve the sad situation of his affairs,—that ath, the last—the surest friend to the unfortute, could only set him free ;——and that it was

better to resolve upon that at once, than vainl endeavor to wade thro' such a sea of troubles, whic in the end would overwhelm him. We may sup pose her spirits sinking under these apprehension when she began to look upon his constancy as fruitless virtue, and from that persuasion to hav said unto him, Curse God,—depend no longer up on him, nor wait the issues of his providence, whic has already forsaken thee;—as there is no hel from that quarter—resolve to extricate thyself,- and since thou hast met with no justice in this worl leave it—die—and force thy passage into a bette country, where misfortunes cannot follow thee.

Whether this paraphrase upon the words i just, or the former interpretations be admitted,- the reply in the text is equally proper;—What shall we receive good at the hands of God, an shall we not receive evil also? Are not both alik the dispensation of an all-wise and good Bein who knows and determines what is *best?* an wherefore should I make myself a judge, to r ceive the one, and yet be so partial as to reje the other, when, by fairly putting both into th scale, I may be convinced how much the goo outweighs the evil in all cases? In my own, co sider how strong this argument is against me.

In the beginning of my days, how did G crown me with honor? in how remarkable manner did his providence set a hedge about m and about all that I had, on every side; how prospered the works of my hands, so that o substance and happiness increased every day

And now, when for reasons best known to his finite wisdom, he has thought fit to try me with flictions, shall I rebel against him in sinning w my lips, and charging him foolishly?—God forb O rather may I look up towards that hand whi has bruised me; for he maketh sore, and he bi eth up; he woundeth, and his hands make whol *from his* bounty only has issued all I had; fro

his wisdom—all I have lost; for he giveth, and he hath taken away,—blessed be his name.

There are few instances of particular virtue more engaging than those of this heroic cast; and, if we may take the testimony of a Heathen philosopher upon it, there is not an object in this world which GOD can be supposed to look down upon with greater pleasure, than that of a good man involved in misfortunes, surrounded on all sides with difficulties, yet cheerfully bearing up his head, and struggling against them with firmness and constancy of mind. Certainly, to our conceptions, such objects must be truly engaging;—and the reason of so exalted an encomium from this hand, is easy to be guessed. No doubt, the wisest of the heathen philosophers had found, from observation upon the life of man, that the many troubles and infirmities of his nature,—the sicknesses, disappointments, sorrows for the loss of children or property, with the numberless other calamities and cross-accidents to which the life of man is subject, were in themselves so *great*,—and so *little* solid comfort to be administered from the mere refinements of philosophy in such emergencies, that there was no virtue which required greater efforts, or which was found so difficult to be achieved upon moral principles; upon moral principles, which had no foundation to sustain this great weight, which the infirmities of our nature had laid upon it. And for this reason it is observable, that there is no subject upon which the moral writers of antiquity have exhausted so much of their eloquence, or where they have spent such time and pains, as in this, of endeavoring to reconcile men to these evils. Insomuch, that from thence, in most modern languages, the patient enduring of afflictions, has by degrees obtained the name of *philosophy*, and almost monopolized the word to itself, as if it was the chief end or compendium of all the wisdom

which philosophy had to offer. And indeed, considering what lights they had, some of them wrote extremely well; yet, as what they said proceeded more from the head than the heart, it was generally more calculated to silence a man in his troubles, than to convince, and teach him how to bear them. And therefore, however subtle and ingenious their arguments might appear in the reading, it is to be feared they lost much of their efficacy, when tried in the application. If a man was thrust back in the world by disappointments, or—as was Job's case—had suffered a sudden change in his fortune,—from an affluent condition was brought down by a train of cruel accidents, and pinched with poverty;—philosophy would come in, and exhort him to stand his ground;—it would tell him, that the same greatness and strength of mind, which enabled him to behave well in the days of his prosperity, should equally enable him to behave well in the days of his adversity;—that it was the property of only weak and base spirits, who were insolent in the one, to be dejected and overthrown by the other, whereas great and generous souls were at all times calm and equal. As they enjoyed the advantages of life with indifference,—they were able to resign them with the same temper,—and consequently,—were out of the reach of fortune. All which, however fine, and likely to satisfy the fancy of a man at ease, could convey but little consolation to a heart already pierced with sorrow;—nor is it to be conceived how an unfortunate creature should any more receive relief from such a lecture, however just, than a man racked with an acute fit of the gout or stone, could be supposed to be set free from torture, by hearing from his physician a nice dissertation upon his case. The philosophic consolations in sickness, or in afflictions for the death of friends and kindred were just as efficacious,—and were rather *in general* to be considered as good sayings,

than good remedies.—So that, if a man was bereaved of a promising child, in whom all his hopes and expectations centered—or a wife was left destitute to mourn the loss and protection of a kind and tender husband,—Seneca or Epictetus would tell the pensive parent, and disconsolate widow,—that tears & lamentations for the dead were fruitless and absurd; that to die, was the necessary and unavoidable debt of nature; and as it could admit of no remedy, it was impious and foolish to grieve and fret themselves upon it. Upon such sage counsel, as well as many other lessons of the same stamp, the same reflection might be applied, which is said to have been made by one of the Roman emperors, to one who administered the same consolations to him on a like occasion—to whom, advising him to be comforted, and make himself easy, since the event had been brought about by a fatality, and could not be helped,—he replied, "That this was "so far from lessening his trouble, that it was the "very circumstance which occasioned it." So that, upon the whole, when the true value of these, and many more of their current arguments, have been weighed and brought to the test,—one is led to doubt, whether the greatest part of their heroes, the most renowned for constancy, were not much more indebted to good nerves and spirits, or the natural happy frame of their tempers, for behaving well, than to any extraordinary helps which they could be supposed to receive from their instructors.—And therefore, I should make no scruple to assert, that one such instance of patience and resignation as this, which the scripture gives us in the person of Job; not of one most pompously declaiming upon the contempt of pain and poverty, but of a man sunk in the lowest condition of humanity,—to behold him, when stripped of his estate,——his wealth, his friends, his children,—cheerfully holding up his head, and entertaining

his hard fortune with firmness and serenity, this, not from a stoical stupidity, but a just se GOD's providence, and a persuasion of his j and goodness in all his dealings;—such an ple, I say, as this, is of more universal use, s truer to the heart, than all the heroic pre which the pedantry of philosophy has to of

This leads me to the point I aim at in thi course;—namely, that there are no principl those of religion, to be depended on in cases distress, and that these are able to encount worst emergencies, and to bear us up under changes and chances to which our life is su

Consider, then, what virtue the very first ciple of religion has, and how wonderfully conducive to this end;—That there is a G powerful, a wise and good being, who first the world, and continues to govern it;—by goodness all things are designed—and by providence all things are conducted to bring the greatest and best ends. The sorrowful an sive wretch that was giving way to his misfor and mournfully sinking under them, the m this doctrine comes in to his aid, hushes complaints—and thus speaks comfort to his "It is the LORD, let him do what seemeth good:—Without his direction, I know that n can befal me,—without his permission, th power can hurt me;—it is impossible a Be wise should mistake my happiness, or that a so good should contradict it. If he has deni riches, or rather advantages,—perhaps he fo the gratifying my wishes would undo me, a my own abuse of them, be perverted to my If he has denied me the request of children in his providence, has thought fit to take from me—how can I say, whether he has no kindly with me, and only taken that away wh foresaw would embitter and shorten my day

does so to ten thousands, where the disobedience of a thankless child has brought down the parent's grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. Has he visited me with sickness, poverty, or other disappointments?—can I say, but these are blessings in disguise?—so many different expressions of his care and concern, to disentangle my thoughts from this world, and fix them upon another——another, a better world beyond this!——This thought opens a new scene of hope and consolation to the unfortunate;——and as the persuasion of a providence reconciles him to the evils he has suffered,——this prospect of a future life gives him strength to despise them, and esteem the light afflictions of his life, as they are, not worthy to be compared to what is reserved for him hereafter.

Things are great or small by comparison—and he who looks no farther than this world, and balances the accounts of his joys and sufferings from that consideration, finds all his sorrows enlarged, and, at the close of them, will be apt to look back, and cast the same sad reflection upon the whole, which the patriarch did to Pharaoh——"That "few and evil had been the days of his pilgrim-"age." But let him lift up his eyes towards heaven, and stedfastly behold the life and immortality of a future state;—he then wipes away all tears from off his eyes for ever and ever;—like the exiled captive, big with the hopes that he is returning home,——he feels not the weight of his chains, or counts the days of his captivity; but looks forward with rapture towards the country where his heart is fled before.

These are the aids which religion offers us towards the regulating of our spirit under the evils of life: But, like great cordials, they are seldom used but on greater occurrences. In the lesser evils of life, we seem to stand unguarded; and our peace and contentment are overthrown, and our happiness broke in upon, by a little impatience of spi-

rit under the cross and untoward accidents we meet with. These stand unprovided for; and we neglect them, as we do the slighter indispositions of the body, which we think not worth treating seriously—and so leave them to nature. In good habits of the body, this may do; and I would gladly believe, there are such good habits of the temper—such a complexional ease and health of heart, as may often save the patient much medicine. We are still to consider, that however such good frames of mind are got—they are worth preserving by all rules; patience and contentment,—which, like the treasure hid in the field, for which, a man sold all he had, to purchase, is of that price, that it cannot be had at too great a purchase, since, without it, the best condition in life cannot make us happy, and, with it, it is impossible we should be miserable, even in the worst. Give me leave, therefore, to close this discourse, with some reflections upon the subject of a contented mind, and the duty in man of regulating his spirit, in our way through life;—a subject in every body's mouth—preached upon daily to our friends and kindred—but too oft in such a style, as to convince the party lectured, only of this truh,—that we bear the misfortunes of others with excellent tranquillity.

I believe there are thousands so extravagant in their ideas of contentment, as to imagine that it must consist in having every thing in this world turn out the way they wish—that they are to sit down in happiness, and feel themselves so at ease at all points, as to desire nothing better, and nothing more. I own there are instances of some, who seem to pass thro' the world as if all their paths had been strewed with rose-buds of delights; but a little experience will convince us, it is a fatal expectation to go upon. We are born to trouble; and we may depend upon it, whilst we live in this world, we shall have it, tho' with intermissions,—that is, in whatever state we are, we shall find a

mixture of good and evil; and therefore, the true way to contentment, is to learn to receive those certain vicissitudes of life,—the returns of good and evil, so as neither to be exalted by the one, or overthrown by the other; but to bear ourselves towards every thing which happens, with such ease and indifference of mind, as to hazard as little as may be. This is the true temperate climate fitted for us by nature, and in which every wise man would wish to live. God knows, we are perpetually straying out of it, and by giving wings to our imaginations, in the transports we dream of, from such or such a situation in life, we are carried away alternately into all the extremes of hot and cold; for which, as we are neither fitted by nature, or prepared by expectation, we feel them with all their violence, and with all their danger too.

God, for wise reasons has made our affairs in this world, almost as fickle and capricious as ourselves. Pain and pleasure, like light and darkness, succeed each other; and he that knows how to accommodate himself to their periodical returns, and can wisely extract the good from the evil, knows only how to live; this is true contentment, at least all that is to be had of it in this world, and, for this, every man must be indebted, not to his fortune, but to himself. And indeed, it would have been strange, if a duty so becoming us, as dependent creatures, and so necessary, besides, to all our well-beings, had been placed out of the reach of any in some measure, to put in practice; and for this reason, there is scarce any lot so low, but there is something in it to satisfy the man whom it has befallen; providence having so ordered things, that, in every man's cup, how bitter soever, there are some cordial drops—some good circumstances, which, if wisely extracted, are sufficient for the purpose he wants them, that is, to make him contented, and if not happy, at least resigned. May God bless us all with this spirit, for the sake of Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

SERMON XVI.

The character of Shimei.

2 SAM. XIX. 21. 1st Part.

But Abishai said, shall not Shimei be put to d for this.—

—IT has not a good aspect—This is the sec time Abishai has proposed Shimei's dest tion ; once in the 16th chapter, on a sudden tr port of indignation, when Shimei cursed Davi " *Why should this dead dog, cried Abishai, curs* " *lord the king ? let me go over, I pray thee, an* " *off his head.*"—This had something at lea gallantry in it ; for in doing it, he hazarde own ; and besides, the offender was not other to be come at ; The second time, is in the when the offender was absolutely in their p —when the blood was cool, and the suppliant holding up his hands for mercy.

—Shall not Shimei, answered Abishai, be to death for this ? So unrelenting a pursuit l less like justice than revenge, which is so cow ly a passion, that it renders Abishai's first inst almost inconsistent with the second. I shal endeavor to reconcile them ; but confine the course simply to Shimei ; and make such r tions upon his character as may be of use t ciety.

Upon the news of his son Absalom's cons cy, David had fled from Jerusalem, and fro own house, for safety ; The representation

of the manner of it, is truly affecting ;—never was a scene of sorrow so full of distress !

The king fled with all his household, to save himself from the sword of the man he loved : He fled with all the marks of humble sorrow—"*with his head covered and barefoot ;*" and as he went by the ascent of mount Olivet, the sacred historian says he wept ;—some gladsome scenes, perhaps, which there had passed—some hours of festivity he had shared with Absalom in better days, pressed tenderly upon nature,—he wept at this sad vicissitude of things :—And all the people that were with him, smitten with his affliction, *covered each* man *his head—weeping as he went* up.

It was on this occasion, when David had got to Bahurim, that Shimei the son of Gera, as we read in the 5th verse, came out. Was it with the choicest oils he could gather from mount Olivet, to pour into his wounds ?—Times and troubles had not done enough ; and thou camest out, Shimei, to add thy portion——

"*And as he came, he cursed David, and threw stones and cast dust at him ; and thus said Shimei, when he cursed : Go to, thou man of Belial—thou hast sought blood,—and behold thou* art *caught in thy own mischief ;* for now hath the *Lord returned* upon thee all the blood *of Saul and his house.*"

There is no small degree of malicious craft in fixing upon a season to give a mark of enmity and ill-will :——A word, a look, which, at one time, would make no impression,——at another time, wounds the heart ; and, like a shaft flying with the wind, pierces deep, which, with its own natural force, would scarce have reached the object aimed at.

This seemed to have been Shimei's hopes ; but excess of malice makes men too quick-sighted, even for their own purpose. Could Shemei pos-

sibly have waited for the ebb of David's passions and till the first great conflict within him had been over—then the reproach of being guilty of Saul's blood must have hurt him:—His heart was possessed with other feelings—it bled for the deadly sting which Absalom had given him—he felt not the indignity of a stranger—"*Behold, my son Absalom, who came out of my bowels, seeketh my life*—*how much more may Shemei do it?—let him alone: It may be the Lord may look upon my affliction, and requite me good for this evil.*"

An injury unanswered, in course grows weak of itself, and dies away in a voluntary remorse—In bad dispositions, capable of no restraint but fear—it has a different effect;—the silent digestion of one wrong, provokes a second. He pursues him with the same invective;—*and as David and his men went by the way, Shemei went along the hill's side over against him; and cursed as he went, and cast dust at him.*

The insolence of base minds in success, is boundless; and would scarce admit of a comparison, did not they themselves furnish us with one in the degrees of their abjection, when evil returns upon them.—The same poor heart which excites ungenerous tempers to triumph over a fallen adversary: In some instances, seems to exalt them above the point of courage, sinks them, in others, even below cowardice;—not unlike some little particles of matter struck off from the surface of the dirt by sunshine—dance and sport there whilst it lasts,—but the moment it is withdrawn—they fall down,—for dust they are—and unto dust they will return,—whilst firmer and larger bodies preserve the stations which nature has assigned them, subjected to laws which no change of weather can alter.

This last, did not seem to be Shemei's case; in all David's prosperity, there is no mention

made of him;—he thrust himself forward into the circle, and possibly was numbered amongst friends and well-wishers.

When the scene changes—and David's troubles force him to leave his house in despair,—— Shimei is the first man we hear of, who comes out against him.

The wheel turns round once more; Absalom is cast down, and David returns in peace.—Shimei suits his behavior to the occasion, and is the first man who hastes to greet him,—and, had the wheel turned round an hundred times, Shimei, I dare say, in every period of its rotation, would have been uppermost.

O Shimei! would to heaven, when thou wast slain, that all thy family had been slain with thee, and not one of thy resemblance left! but ye have multiplied exceedingly, and replenished the earth,—and if I prophesy rightly—ye will, in the end, *subdue it.*

There is not a character in the world, which has so bad an influence upon the affairs of it, as this of Shimei: Whilst power meets with honest checks, and the evils of life with honest refuge, the world will never be undone; but thou, Shimei, hast sapped it at both extremes; for thou corruptedst prosperity—and it is thou who hast broken the heart of poverty; and, so long as worthless spirits can be ambitious ones, it is a character we shall never want. O! it infests the court—the camp—the cabinet;—it infests the church;—go where you will—in every quarter, in every profession, you see a Shimei following the wheels of the fortunate, through thick mire and clay———

—Haste, Shimei!——haste, or thou wilt be undone forever.—Shimei girdeth up his loins, and speedeth after him.—Behold the hand which governs every thing,—takes the wheels from off his

chariot, so that he who driveth, driveth on heavily.—Shimei doubles his speed—but it is the contrary way; he flies like the wind over a sandy desert, and the place thereof shall know it no more. ——Stay, Shimei, it is your patron—your friend—your benefactor;—it is the man who has raised you from the dunghill.—It is all one to Shimei; Shimei is the barometer of every man's fortune; marks the rise and fall of it, with all the variations from scorching hot to freezing cold upon his countenance, that the similie will admit of. Is a cloud upon thy affairs?—see—it hangs over Shimei's brow.—Hast *thou been* spoken for to the king or the captain of the host without success?—look not into the court-calendar—the vacancy is filled up in Shimei's face. Art thou in debt? tho' not to Shimei—no matter—the worst officer of the law shall not be more insolent.

What than, Shimei?—is the guilt of poverty so black—is it of so general a concern, that thou and all thy family must rise up as one man to reproach it?—when it lost every thing—did it lose the right to pity too?—or did He, who maketh poor as well as maketh rich, strip it of its natural powers to mollify the hearts and supple the temper of your race? Trust me, ye have much to answer for; it is this treatment which it has ever met with from spirits like yours, which has gradually taught the world to look upon it as the greatest of evils, and shun it as the worst disgrace.—And what is it, I beseech you—what is it that man will not do, to keep clear of so sore an imputation and punishment? Is it not to fly from this that *he rises early,—late takes rest, and eats the bread of carefulness?*—that he plots—contrives—swears—lies—shuffles,—puts on all shapes—tries all garments,——wears them, with this, or that side, outward——just as it favors his escape?

They who have considered our nature, affirm,

that shame and disgrace are two of the most insupportable evils of human life: The courage and spirits of many have mastered other misfortunes, and borne themselves up against them,—but the wisest and best of souls have not been a match for these: And we have many a tragical instance on record, what greater evils have been run into, merely to avoid this one.

Without this tax of infamy, poverty, with all the burdens it lays upon our flesh—so long as it is virtuous, could never break the spirits of a man; all its hunger, and pain, and nakedness, are nothing to it,—they have some counterpoise of good; and, besides, they are directed by providence, and must be submitted to; but these are afflictions, not from the hand of GOD, or nature——"*for* "*they do come forth of the* DUST, and most properly "may be said *to spring out of the* GROUND; and "this is the reason they lay such stress upon our "patience,—and in the end, create such a dis-"trust of the world, as makes us look up—and "pray, *Let me fall into thy hands, O* GOD! *but let* "*me not fall into the hands of men.*"

Agreeable to this, was the advice of Eliphaz to Job, in the day of his distress——"*Acquaint thy-*"*self*, said he, *now with* GOD."—Indeed his poverty seemed to have left him no other friend: The sword of the Sabeans had frightened them away—all but a few; and, of what kind they were, the very proverb, of *Job's comforters*—says enough.

It is an instance which gives one great concern for human nature, "that a man, *who always wept* "for him who was in *trouble*;—*who never saw any* "*perish for want of clothing*—*who never suffered the* "*stranger to lodge in the street, but opened his door* "*to the traveller*;—*that a man*, of so good a cha-"racter——*that he never caused the eyes of the wi-*"*dow to fail*,——*or had eaten his morsel by himself* "*alone, and the fatherless had not eaten thereof*;"—

that such a man, the moment he fell into poverty, should have occasion to cry out for quarter!——*Have mercy upon me, O my friends! for the hand of God has touched me.*——Gentleness and humanity, (one would think) would melt the hardest heart, and charm the fiercest spirit; bind up the most violent hand, and still the most abusive tongue:—But the experiment failed, in a stronger instance, of Him, whose meat and drink it was to do us good,—and, in pursuit of which, whose whole life was a continued scene of kindness and of insults,—for which we must go back to the same explanation with which we set out,—and that is, the scandal of poverty.——

"*This fellow, we know not whence he is,*"—was the popular cry of one part; and with those who seemed to know better, the query did not lessen the disgrace:—Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?—Of Mary! great God of Israel! What! —of the meanest of thy people? (*for he had not regarded the low estate* of his handmaiden)—and of the poorest too! (for she had not a lamb to offer, but was purified, as Moses directed in such a case, by the oblation of a turtle dove).

That the Saviour of their nation could be poor, and not have where to lay his head,—was a crime never to be forgiven; and tho' the purity of his doctrine, and the works which he had done in its support, were stronger arguments on its side than his humiliation could be against it,—yet the offence still remained;—they looked for the redemption of Israel; but they would have it only in those dreams of power which filled their imagination.

Ye, who weigh the worth of all things only in the goldsmith's balance,——was this religion for you?—a religion whose appearance was not great and splendid,—but looked thin and meagre, and whose principles and promises showed more like

the curses of the law, than its blessings!——for they called for suffering, and promised little but persecutions.

In truth, it is not easy for tribulation or distress, for nakedness or famine, to make many converts out of pride: Or reconcile a worldly heart to the scorn and reproaches, which were sure to be the portion of every one who believed a mystery so discredited by the world, and so unpalatable to all its passions and pleasures.

But, to bring this sermon to its proper conclusion:——

If Astrea, or Justice, never finally took her leave of the world, till the day that poverty first became ridiculous, it is matter of consolation, that the God of Justice is ever over us:—That, whatever outrages the lowness of our condition may be exposed to, from a mean and undiscerning world,—that we walk in the presence of the greatest and most generous of Beings, who is infinitely removed from cruelty and straitness of mind, and all those little and illiberal passions, with which we hourly insult each other.

The worst part of mankind, are not always to be conquered;—but, if they are—it is by the imitation of those qualities, which must do it:—It is true—as I have shown—they may fail; but still, all is not lost;—for if we conquer not the world ——in the very attempts to do it, we shall, at least, conquer ourselves, and lay the foundation of our peace (where it ought to be) within our own hearts.

SERMON XVII.

The Case of Hezekiah and the Messengers,

PREACHED BEFORE HIS EXCELLENCY THE EARL OF HERTFORD, AT PARIS, 1763.

2 KINGS, XX. 15.

And he said, What have they seen in thine house? And Hezekiah answered, All the things that are in mine house, have they seen: There is nothing among all my treasures that I have not shown them.

—AND where was the harm, you will say in all this?

An eastern prince, the son of Baladine, had sent messengers, with presents, as far as from Babylon, to congratulate Hezekiah upon the recovery from his sickness; and Hezekiah, who was a good prince, acted consistently with himself;—*he received and entertained the men, and hearkened unto them;* and before he sent them away, he courteously showed them all that was worth a stranger's curiosity, in his house, and in his kingdom—and, in this, seemed only to have discharged himself of what urbanity, or the *etiquette* of courts might require. Notwithstanding this, in the verse which immediately follows the text, we find he had done amiss; and, as a punishment for it, that all his riches, which his forefathers had laid up in store unto that day, were threatened to be carried away in triumph to Babylon,—the very place from whence the messengers had come.

A hard return! and what his behavior does not seem to have deserved. To set this matter in a clear light, it will be necessary to enlarge upon the whole story; the reflections which will arise out of it, as we go along, may help us—at least, I hope they will be of use on their own account.

After the miraculous defeat of the Assyrians, we read, in the beginning of this chapter, that Hezekiah was sick, even unto death; and that GOD sends the prophet Isaiah, with the unwelcome message, *That he should set his house in order, for that he should die, and not live.*

There are many instances of men, who have received such news with the greatest ease of mind, and even entertained the thoughts of it with smiles upon their countenances,—and this, either from strength of spirits, and the natural cheerfulness of their temper,—or, that they knew the world, —and cared not for it,—or expected a better;—yet, thousands of good men, with all the helps of philosophy, and against all the assurances of a well-spent life, that the change must be to their account,——upon the approach of death, have still leaned towards this world, and wanted spirits and resolution to bear the shock of a separation from it for ever.

This, in some measure, seemed to have been Hezekiah's case;—for though he walked before GOD in truth, and with a perfect heart, and had done that which was good in his sight,—yet we find that the hasty summons afflicted him greatly;—that, upon the delivery of the message, he wept sore;—that he turned his face towards the wall, —perhaps for the greater secrecy of his devotion, and, that, by withdrawing himself thus from all external objects, he might offer up his prayer unto his GOD with greater and more fervent attention.

——And he prayed, and said, O LORD! I beseech thee remember—O Hezekiah! how couldst thou fear that GOD had forgotten thee? or how couldst thou doubt of his remembrance of thy integrity, when he called thee to receive its recompense?

But here it appears of what materials man is

made :——He pursues happiness——and yet, is so content with misery, that he would wander for ever in this dark vale of it—and say, "*It is good, Lord! to be here, and to build tabernacles of rest;*" and so long as we are clothed with flesh, & nature has so great a share within us, it is no wonder if that part claims its right, and pleads for the sweetness of life, notwithstanding all its care and disappointments.

This natural wickedness, no doubt, had its weight in Hezekiah's earnest prayer for life :—And yet from the success it met with, and the immediate change of GOD's purpose thereupon, it is hard to imagine, but that it must have been accompanied with some meritorious and more generous motive: And, if we suppose, as some have done, that he turned his face towards the wall, because that part of his chamber looked towards the temple, the care of whose preservation lay next his heart, we may, consistently enough, give this sense to his prayer.

"O GOD! remember how I have walked be-
"fore thee in truth;——how much I have done
"to rescue thy religion from error and falsehood:
"——Thou knowest that the eyes of the world
"are fixed upon me, as one that hath forsaken
"their idolatry, and restored thy worship;——
"that I stand in the midst of a crooked and cor-
"rupt generation, which looks through all my ac-
"tions, and watches all events which happen to
"me;—if now they shall see me snatched away,
"in the midst of my days and service, how will
"thy great name suffer in my extinction?—Will
"not the heathen say, Thus it is to serve the GOD
"of Israel!—How faithfully did Hezekiah walk
"before him?—what enemies did he bring upon
"himself, in too warmly promoting his worship?
"and now when the hour of sickness and distress
"came upon him, and he most wanted the aid

of his God—behold how he was forsaken!"
It is not unreasonable, to ascribe some such
ous and more disinterested motive to Hezekiah's
sire of life, from the issue and success of his
ayer:—*For it came to pass, before Isaiah had gone*
into the middle court, that the word of the Lord
ne to him, saying, Turn again, and tell Hezeki-
I have heard his prayer, I have seen his tears,
behold I will heal him.
It was upon this occasion, as we read in the 12th
se of this chapter, that Baradock-baladan, son
Baladine king of Babylon, sent letters and a
sent unto Hezekiah:—He had heard the fame
his sickness and recovery;—for as the Chal-
ns were great searchers into the secrets of na-
e, especially into the motions of the celestial
ies, in all probability, they had taken notice
hat distance, of the strange appearance of the
dow's returning ten degrees backwards upon
ir dials, and had inquired and learned upon
it account, and in whose favor such a sign was
en;—so that this astronomical miracle besides
political motive which it would suggest, of
rting such a favorite of heaven, had been suf-
nt, by itself, to have led a curious people as
as Jerusalem, that they might see the man for
ose sake the sun had forsook his course.
nd here we see how hard it is to stand the
ck of prosperity,—and how much truer a proof
give of our strength, in that extreme of life,
in the other.
all the trials of adversity, we find, that He-
iah behaved well,—nothing unmanned him,
en besieged by the Assyrian host, which shut
up in Jerusalem, and threatened his destruc-
,—he stood unshaken, and depended upon
's succor: When cast down upon his bed of
ness, and threatened with death,—he meekly
ed his face towards the wall, wept and prayed,

and depended upon God's mercy :—But, no sooner does prosperity return upon him, and the messengers from a far country come to pay the flattering homage due to his greatness, and the extraordinary felicity of his life, but he turns giddy and sinks under the weight of his good fortune and, with a transport unbecoming a wise man upon it, it is said he harkened unto the men, and showed them all the house of his precious things the silver and the gold, the spices and the precious ointments, and all the house of his armor, and all that was found in his treasures ;——that there was nothing in his house, nor in his dominions, that Hezekiah showed them not——for tho' it is not expressly said here,(tho' it is in the parallel passage in Chronicles), nor is he charged by the prophet, that he did this out of vanity, and a weak transport of ostentation ;——yet as we are sure God could not be offended but where there was a real crime, we might reasonably conclude that this was his : And that He who searches into the heart of man, beheld, that his was corrupted with the blessings he had given him ;——and that it was just, to make what was the occasion of his pride become the instrument of his punishment ——by decreeing, that all the riches he had laid up in store until that day, should be carried away in triumph to Babylon, the very place from whence the messengers had come, who had been eye witnesses of his folly.

"O Hezekiah !——how couldst thou provoke "God to bring this judgment upon thee ! How "could thy spirit, all meek and gentle as it was, "have ever fallen into this snare ? Were thy "treasures rich as the earth—What ! was thy "heart so vain as to be lifted up therewith ? "Was not all that was valuable in the world—— "nay, was not heaven itself almost at thy com- "mand whilst thou wast humble ? and, how was

"it that thou couldst barter away all this for "what was lighter than a bubble, and desecrate "an action so full of courtesy and kindness as "thine appeared to be, by suffering it to take its "rise from so polluted a fountain?"

There is scarce any thing which the heart more unwillingly bears than an analysis of this kind.

We are a strange compound;—and something foreign from what charity would suspect, so eternally twists itself into what we do, that, not only in momentous concerns, where interest lists under it all the powers of disguise,—but even in the most indifferent of our actions—not worth a fallacy—by force of habit, we continue it:—So that whatever a man is about, observe him,—he stands armed, inside and out with two motives;—an ostensible one for the world, and another which he reserves for his own private use;—this, you may say, the world has no concern with: It might have been so;—but, by obtruding the wrong motive upon the world, and stealing from it a character, instead of winning one,—we give it a right and temptation along with it, to inquire into the affair.

The motives of the one, for doing it, are often little better than the other for deserving it. Let us see if some social virtue may not be extracted from the errors of both the one and the other.

VANITY bids all her sons to be generous and brave, and her daughters to be chaste and courteous. But, why do we want her instructions?—Ask the comedian who is taught a part he feels not.—

Is it that the principles of religion want strength—or that the real passion for what is good and worthy, will not carry us high enough?—GOD! thou knowest they carry us too high—we want, not *to be*—but *to seem*—

Look out of your door,——take notice of that man:—See what disquieting, intriguing and shift-

ing, he is content to go thro', merely to be thought a man of plain dealing :——Three grains of honesty would save him all this trouble :—Alas he has them not——

Behold a second, under a show of piety, hiding the impurities of a debauched life :——He is just entering the house of GOD :——Would he were more pure—or less pious :—But then he could not gain his point.

Observe a third, going on almost in the same track :——With what an inflexible sanctity of deportment he sustains himself as he advances !—every line in his face writes abstinence ;——every stride looks like a check upon his desires :—See, I beseech you, how he is cloaked up with sermons, prayers and sacraments ; and so bemuffled with the externals of religion, that he has not a hand to spare for a worldly purpose :—He has armor at least.—Why does he put it on ?—Is there no serving GOD without all this ?—Must the garb of religion be extended so wide, to the danger of its rending ?—Yes, truly, or it will not hide the secret—and, What is that ?

——That the saint has no religion at all.

——But here comes GENEROSITY ; giving—not to a decayed artist—but to the arts and sciences themselves.——See,—he *builds not a chamber for the wall apart for the prophet ;* but whole schools and colleges for those who come after. LORD how they will magnify his name !—it is in capitals already ;—the first——the highest, in the gilded rent-roll of every hospital and asylum—

—One honest tear, shed in private over the unfortunate, is worth it all.

What a problematical set of creatures does dissimulation make us !—Who would divine, that all that anxiety and concern, so visible in the airs of one half of the great assembly, should arise from nothing else, but that the other half of it may

them to be men of consequence, penetra-
parts, and conduct?—What a noise amongst
aimants about it?—Behold *Humility* out of
pride;——and *Honesty*, almost out of kna-
—*Chastity*, never once in harm's way,—and
re like a Spanish soldier upon an Italian
——a bladder full of wind.——
lark! that—the sound of that trumpet—Let
y soldier run:—It is some good Christian
alms. O, PITY! thou gentlest of human
ns! soft and tender are thy notes, and ill
l they with so loud an instrument.
is, something jars, and will for ever jar, in
cases; imposture is all dissonance, let what
r soever of it undertake the part; let him
nize and modulate it as he may, one tone
ntradict another; and, whilst we have ears
r, we shall distinguish it: It is truth only
is consistent, and ever in harmony with it-
It sits upon our lips, like the natural notes
ie melodies, ready to drop out, whether we
no; it racks no invention to let ourselves a-
—and needs fear no critic, to have the same
ency in the heart which appears in the action.
s a pleasing allusion the scripture makes use
calling us sometimes a house, and some-
a temple according to the more or less ex-
qualities of the spiritual guest which is
l within us. Whether this is the precise
d of the distinction, I will not affirm; but
uch may be said, that if we are to be tem-
t is truth and singleness of heart, which
nake the dedication: It is this which must
stinguish them from the unhallowed pile,
dirty tricks and impositions are practised
host upon the traveller, who tarries but
oment, and returns not again.
all take notice, how close and reserved
are: But we do not take notice, at the same

time, that every one may have something to conceal, as well as ourselves: And that we are only marking the distances, and taking the measure of self-defence from each other, in the very instances we complain of. This is so true, that there is scarce any character so rare, as a man of a real open and generous integrity,——who carries his heart in his hand,—who says the thing he thinks, and does the thing he pretends. Though one can dislike the character,—yet, Discretion generally shakes her head—and the world soon lets him into the reason.

"*O that I had in the wilderness a lodging of wayfaring men! that I might leave such a people, and go from them.*" Where is the man, of a nice sense of truth and strong feelings, from whom the duplicity of the world has not, at one time or other, wrung the same wish? and where lies the wilderness to which some one has not fled, from the same melancholy impulse?

Thus much for those who give occasion to be thought ill of;—let us say a word or two unto those who take it.

But to avoid all common-place cant as much as I can on this head,—I will forbear to say, because I do not think it,—that it is a breach of Christian charity, to think or speak evil of our neighbor, &c.

We cannot avoid it, our opinions must follow the evidence; and we are perpetually in such engagements and situations, that it is our duty to speak what our opinions are:—But God forbid that this ever should be done, but from its best motive—the sense of what is due to virtue, governed by discretion and the utmost fellow-feeling. Were we to go on otherwise, beginning with the great broad cloak of hypocrisy, and so down thro' all its trimmings and facings—tearing away without mercy, all that looked seemly,—we should leave but a tattered world of it.

But I confine what I have to say, to a character less equivocal, and which takes up too much room in the world: It is that of those, who, from a general distrust of all that looks disinterested, finding nothing to blame in an action, and, perhaps, much to admire in it,....immediately fall foul upon its motives :....*Does Job serve God for nought ?*..... What a vile insinuation !....Besides, the question was not, whether Job was a rich man or a poor man ?....but whether he was a man of integrity or no ?....and the appearances were strong on his side : Indeed it might have been otherwise ; it was possible Job might be insincere, and the devil took advantage of the die for it.

It is a bad picture, and done by a terrible master,—and yet we are always copying it. Does a man, from a real conviction of heart, forsake his vices ?—the position is not to be allowed,—no ; his vices have forsaken him.

Does a pure virgin fear God, and say her prayers ?....she is in her climacteric.

Does humanity clothe and educate the unknown orphan ?—Poverty ! thou hast no genealogies :—See ! is he not the father of the child ? Thus do we rob heroes of the best part of their glory....their virtue. Take away the motive of the act, you take away all that is worth having in it ;—...wrest it to ungenerous ends, you load the virtuous man who did it, with infamy....Undo it all.... I beseech you : Give him back his honor,....restore the jewel you have taken from him,....replace him in the eye of the world.....It is too late.

It is painful to utter the reproaches which should come in here. I will trust them with yourselves : In coming from that quarter, they will more naturally produce such fruits as will not set your teeth on edge—for they will be the fruits of love and good-will, to the praise of God, and the happiness of the world, which I wish

SERMON XVIII.

The Levite and his Concubine.

JUDGES XIX. 1, 2, 3.

And it came to pass in those days, when there was king in Israel, that there was a certain Levite journing on the side of mount Ephraim, who t unto him a concubine.—

—— A CONCUBINE !....but the text accou for it....*for in those days there was no k in Israel*,....and the Levite you will say, like eve other man in it, did what seemed right in his o eyes, and so, you may add, did his concubine to *for she played the whore against him and went aw* .....Then shame and grief go with her, a wherever she seeks a shelter, may the hand justice shut the door against her.——

Not so: For she went unto her father's hou in Bethlem-judah, and was with him four wh months. Blessed interval for meditation upon t fickleness and vanity of this world, and its pl sures ! I see the holy man upon his knees,....w hands compressed to his bosom, and, with uplif eyes, thanking heaven, that the object which l so long shared his affections, was fled——

The text gives a different picture of his sit tion,.....*for he arose and went after to speak friel to her, and to bring her back again, having his s vant with him, and a couple of asses; and she brou him into her father's house; and when the father the damsel saw him, he rejoiced to meet him.*——

....A most sentimental group ! you will sa And so it is, my good commentator, the world ta of every thing; Give but the outlines of a story; *let spleen* or *prudery* snatch the pencil, and th *will finish* it with so many hard strokes, and w

so dirty a coloring, that *candor* and *courtesy* will sit in torture as they look at it. Gentle and virtuous spirits! ye who know not what it is to be rigid interpreters, but of your own failings,....to you I address myself the unhired advocates for the conduct of the misguided.....Whence is it, that the world is not more jealous of your office? How often must ye repeat it, "That such a one's doing so or so,"....is not sufficient evidence, by itself, to overthrow the accused?....that our actions stand surrounded with a thousand circumstances which do not present themselves at first sight;....that the first springs and motives which impelled the unfortunate, lie deeper still:....And that of the millions which every hour are arraigned, thousands of them may have erred merely from the *head;* and been actually outwitted into evil; and, even when from the *heart*,....that the difficulties and temptations under which she acted,....the force of the passions, the suitableness of the object, and the many struggles of virtue before she fell, may be so many appeals from justice to the judgment-seat of pity.

Here then let us stop a moment,....and give the story of the Levite and his concubine a second hearing. Like all others, much of it depends upon the telling; and as the scripture has left us no kind of comment upon it, it is a story on which the heart cannot be at a loss for what to say, or the imagination for what to suppose——the danger is, humanity may say too much.

And it came to pass in those days, when there was no king in Israel, that a certain Levite sojourning on the side of mount Ephraim, took unto himself a concubine.

O Abraham, thou father of the faithful! if this was wrong....why didst thou set so ensnaring an example before the eyes of thy descendants? and, why did the God of Abraham, the God of

Isaac and Jacob, bless so often the seed of [illegible] intercourses, and promise to multiply and [illegible] princes come out of them?

God can dispense with his own laws; and [illegible] cordingly, we find the holiest of the patria[illegible] and others in scripture whose hearts cleaved [illegible] unto God, accommodating themselves as we[illegible] they could to the dispensation: That Abraham [illegible] Hagar; that Jacob, besides his two wives, Ra[illegible] and Leah, took also unto him Zilbah and Bil*h* from whom many of the tribes descended; t*h* David had seven wives and ten concubines,....*R* hoboam sixty; and that, in whatever cases it b came reproachable, it seemed not so much th thing itself, as the abuse of it, which made it s This was remarkable in that of Solomon, who excess became an insult upon the privileges mankind; for, by the same plan of luxury, whi made it necessary to have forty thousand stalls horses,....he had unfortunately miscalculated l other wants, and so had seven hundred wiv and three hundred concubines.

Wise....deluded man! was it not that th madest some amends for thy bad practice, by t good preaching, what had become of thee!— Three hundred.....but let us turn aside, I beseec thee from so bad a stumbling-block.

The Levite had but one. The Hebrew wo imports a woman a concubine, or a wife a con bine, to distinguish her from the more infamo species, who came under the roofs of the licen ous without principle. Our annotators tell that, in Jewish *economics*, these differed little fr the wife, except in some outward ceremonies a stipulations, but agreed with her in all the tr essences of marriage, and gave themselves up the husband, (for so he is called), with fai plighted, with sentiments and with affection.

Such an one the Levite wanted to share his

litude, and fill up that uncomfortable blank in the heart in such a situation; for notwithstanding all we meet with in books, in many of which, no doubt, there are a good many handsome things said upon the sweets of retirement, &c. . . . . yet still "*it is not good for a man to be alone:*"—nor can all which the cold-hearted pedant stuns our ears with upon the subject, ever give one answer of satisfaction to the mind;—in the midst of the loudest vauntings of philosophy, Nature will have her yearning for society and friendship. A good heart wants some object to be kind to; and the best parts of our blood, and the purest of our spirits, suffer most under the destitution.

Let the torpid monk seek heaven comfortless and alone—God speed him! For my own part, I fear I should never so find the way. Let me be wise and religious, but let me be Man: wherever thy providence places me, or whatever be the road I take to get to thee, give me some companion in my journey, be it only to remark to, How our shadows lengthen as the sun goes down, to whom I may say, How fresh is the face of nature! How sweet the flowers of the field! How delicious are these fruits!

Alas! with bitter herbs, like his passover, did the Levite eat them: For, as they thus walked the path of life together, she wantonly turned aside into another, and fled from him.

It is the mild and quiet half of the world, who are generally outraged and borne down by the other half of it: But in this they have the advantage, whatever be the sense of their wrongs, that pride stands not so watchful a centinel over their forgiveness, as it does in the breasts of the fierce and froward: We should all of us, I believe, be more forgiving than we are, would the world but give us leave; but it is apt to interpose its ill offices in remissions, especially of this kind: The

truth is, it has its laws, to which the heart is not always a party; and acts so like an unfeeling engine in all cases, without distinction, that it requires all the firmness of the most settled humanity to bear up against it.

Many a bitter conflict would the Levite have to sustain with himself, his concubine, and the sentiments of his tribe, upon the wrong done him; much matter for pleading, and many an embarrassing account on all sides. In a period of four whole months, every passion would take its empire by turns; and, in the ebbs and flows of the less unfriendly ones, PITY would find some moments to be heard,——RELIGION herself would not be silent,—CHARITY would have much to say; and, thus assisted, every object he beheld on the borders of mount Ephraim,——every grot and grove he passed by, would solicit the recollection of former kindness, and awaken an advocate in her behalf, more powerful than them all.

"I grant——I grant it all," he would cry——"it is foul! it is faithless!—but why is the door "of mercy to be shut forever against it? and, "why is it to be the only sad crime that the in"jured may not remit, or reason or imagination "pass over without a scar? Is it the blackest?—"In what catalogue of human offences is it so "marked? Or is it, that, of all others, it is a "blow most grievous to be endured?——The "heart cries out, It is so: but let me ask my own, "What passions are they which give edge and "force to this weapon which has struck me? "and, whether it is not my own pride, as much "as my virtues, which at this moment excite "the greatest part of that intolerable anguish in "the wound which I am laying to her charge? "But merciful heaven! was it otherwise, why is "an unhappy creature of thine to be persecuted "by me with so much cruel revenge and ran-

"corous despite, as my first transport called for? "Have faults no extenuations?—Makes it no- "thing, that, when the trespass was commited, "she forsook the partner of her guilt, and fled "directly to her father's house? And is there no "difference betwixt one propensly going out of "the road, and continuing there thro' depravity "of will,—and a hapless wanderer straying by "delusion, and warily treading back her steps? "—Sweet is the look of sorrow for an offence "—in a heart determined never to commit it "more!—Upon that altar only, could I offer up "my wrongs.—Cruel is the punishment which an "ingenuous mind will take upon itself, from the "remorse of so hard a trespass against me; and, "if that will not balance the account——just God! "let me forgive the rest. Mercy well becomes "the heart of all thy creatures, but most of thy "servant, a Levite, who offers up so many daily "sacrifices to thee, for the transgressions of thy "people.——

—"But to little purpose," he would add, "have "I served at thy altar, where my business was to "sue for mercy, had I not learned to practise it."

Peace and happiness rest upon the head and heart of every man who can thus think.

So he arose, and went after her to speak friendly to her;—in the original, "to speak to her heart;" to apply to their former endearments, and to ask, how she could be so unkind to him, and so very unkind to herself?

Even the upbraidings of the quiet and relenting are sweet: Not like the strivings of the fierce and inexorable, who bite and devour all who have thwarted them in their way; but they are calm and courteous, like the spirit which watches over their character. How could such a temper woo the damsel, and not bring her back? or, how could the father of the damsel, in such a scene,

have a heart open to any impressions, but
mentioned in the text?—*that when he saw*
he rejoiced to meet him; urged his stay from
to day, with that most irresistible of all inv
ons—"*Comfort thy heart, and tarry all night*
"*let thine heart be merry.*"

If *Mercy* and *Truth* thus met together in se
this account, *Love* would surely be of the p
Great—great is its power in cementing wh
been broken, and wiping out wrongs even
the memory itself: And so it was,—for th
vite arose up, and, with him, his concubin
his servant, and they departed.

It serves no purpose to pursue the stor
ther; the catastrophe is horrid, and woul
us beyond the particular purpose for wh
have enlarged upon thus much of it, and t
to discredit rash judgment, and illustrate, fro
manner of conducting this drama, the co
which the *dramatis personæ* of every other
may have a right to. Almost one half o
time is spent in telling and hearing evil c
another: Some unfortunate knight is alwa
on this stage, and every hour brings forth
thing strange and terrible, to fill up our disc
and our astonishment, "How people can
foolish!"—and it is well if the compliment
there: So that there is not a social virtu
which there is so constant a demand,—or c
quently, so well worth cultivating, as that
opposes this unfriendly current;——man
rapid, are the springs which feed it, and v
and sudden, God knows, are the gusts whic
der it unsafe to us in this short passage c
lives.—Let us make the discourse as servi
as we can, by tracing some of the most rem
ble of them up to their source.

And first, there is one miserable inlet t
evil, and which, by the way, if speculation i

posed to precede practise, may have been derived, for aught I know, from some of our busiest inquirers after Nature,—and that is, when, with more zeal than knowledge, we account for phenomena, before we are sure of their existence.—*It is not the manner of the Romans to condemn any man to death* (much less to be martyred) said Festus;—*and doth our law judge any man, before it hear him and know what he doeth?* cried Nicodemus; *and he that answereth*, or determineth *a matter before he has heard it,—it is folly and a shame unto him.*—We are generally in such haste to make our own decrees, that we pass over the justice of these; and then the scene is so changed by it, that it is our own folly only which is real, and that of the accused, which is imaginary: Thro' too much precipitancy it will happen so,—and then the jest is spoiled, or we have criticised our own shadow.

A second way is, when the process goes on more orderly, and we begin with getting information, but do it from those suspected evidences, against which our SAVIOUR warns us, when he bids us "*not to judge according to appearance;*"—in truth, it is behind these, that most of the things which blind human judgment, lie concealed: And, on the contrary, there are many things which appear to be, which are not.—*Christ came eating and drinking,—behold a wine-bibber!*—he sat with sinners; he was their friend:——In many cases of which kind, *Truth*, like a modest matron, scorns art, and disdains to press herself forwards into the circle to be seen:——Ground sufficient for *Suspicion* to draw up the libel, for *Malice* to give the torture, or rash *Judgment* to start up and pass a final sentence.

A third way is, when the facts which denote misconduct, are less disputable, but are commented upon with an asperity of censure, which a hu-

mane or a gracious temper would spare: An abhorrence against what is criminal, is so fair a plea for this, and looks so like virtue in the face, that, in a sermon against rash judgment, it would be unseasonable to call it in question; and yet, I declare, in the fullest torrent of exclamations which the guilty can deserve, that the simple apostrophe, "Who made me to differ: Why was not I an example?"—would touch my heart more, and give me a better earnest of the commentator's, than the most corrosive period you could add. The punishment of the unhappy, I fear, is enough without it; and, were it not, it is piteous, the tongue of a Christian, whose religion is all candor and courtesy, should be made the executioner. We find, in the discourse between Abraham and the rich man, tho' the one was in heaven, and the other in hell, yet still the patriarch treated him with mild language: *Son!—Son, remember that thou in thy life-time*, &c. &c. And in the dispute about the body of Moses, between the archangel and the devil, (himself,) St. Jude tells us, he durst not bring a railing accusation against him:—It was unworthy his high character, and indeed might have been impolitic too; for if he had, (as one of our divines notes upon the passage) the devil had been too hard for him at railing,—it was his own weapon,—and basest spirits, after his example, are the most expert at it.

This leads me to the observation of a fourth cruel inlet to this evil, and that is, the desire of being thought men of wit and parts, and the vain expectation of coming honestly by the title, by shrewd and sarcastic reflections upon whatever is done in the world. This is setting up trade upon the broken stock of other people's failings,—perhaps their misfortunes:——So much good may it do them with what honor they can get,——the farthest extent of which, I think is to be praised, as we do some sauces, with tears in our eyes. It is

a commerce most illiberal; and as it requires no vast capital, too many embark in it; and, so long as there are bad passions to be gratified, and bad heads to judge, with such it may pass for wit, or at least, like some vile relation, whom all the family is ashamed of, claim kindred with it even in better companies. Whatever be the degree of its affinity, it has helped to give wit a bad name, as if the main essence of it was satire. Certainly there is a difference betwen *bitterness* and *saltness*, that is between the malignity and the festivity of wit: The one is a mere quickness of apprehension, void of humanity, and is a talent of the devil; the other comes down from the Father of spirits, so pure and abstracted from persons, that willingly it hurts no man; or, if it touches upon an indecorum, it is with that dexterity of true genius, which enables him rather to give a new color to the absurdity, and let it pass. He may smile at the shape of the obelisk raised to another's fame; but the malignant wit will level it at once with the ground, and build his own upon the ruins of it.——

What then, ye rash censurers of the world! have ye no mansions for your credit, but those from whence ye have extruded the right owners? Are there no regions for you to shine in, that ye descend for it into the low caverns of abuse and crimination? Have ye no seats——but those of the scornful to sit down in? If HONOR has mistook his road, or the VIRTUES in their excesses, have approached too near the confines of VICE, are they therefore to be cast down the precipice? Must BEAUTY for ever be trampled upon in the dirt, for one—one false step? And shall no one virtue or good quality, out of the thousand the fair penitent may have left,——shall not one of them be suffered to stand by her?——Just GOD of heaven and earth!——

But thou art merciful, loving and right
and lookest down with pity upon those wrong
servants do unto each other: Pardon us, w
seech thee, for them, and all our transgressi
let it not be remembered, that we were bre
of the same flesh, the same feelings and inf
ties. O my God! write it not down in thy
that thou madest us merciful, after thy own im
that thou hast given us a religion, so court
so good tempered, that every precept of it ca
a balm along with it to heal the soreness o
natures, and sweeten our spirits,—that we n
live with such kind intercourse in this worl
will fit us to exist together in a better.

SERMON XIX.

Felix's behavior towards Paul, examined.

ACTS XXIV. 26.

He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him.

A NOBLE object to take up the consideration of the Roman governor!

"—*He hoped that money should have been given* "*him!*"——For what end? to enable him to judge betwixt right and wrong!——and, From whence was it to be wrung? from the poor scrip of a disciple of the carpenter's son, who left nothing to his followers but poverty and sufferings.

And was this Felix!—the great, the noble Felix!—Felix the happy!—the gallant Felix, who kept Drusilla!—Could he do this?——Base passion! what canst thou not make us do?

Let us consider the whole transaction.

Paul, in the beginning of this chapter, had been accused before Felix, by Tertullus, of very grievous crimes,—of being a pestilent fellow—a mover of seditions, and a profaner of the temple, &c. To which accusations the apostle, having liberty from Felix to reply, makes his defence from the 10th to the 22d verse, to this purport. He shows him, first, that the whole charge was destitute of all proof; which he openly challenges them to produce against him, if they had it:—That, on the contrary, he was so far from being the man Tertullus had represented, that the very principles of the religion with which he then stood charged, and which they called heresy, led him to be the most unexceptionable in his conduct, by the continual exercise which it demanded of him, of having a conscience void of offence at all

times, both towards God and man: That, consistently with this, his adversaries had neither found him in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogue, or in the city; for this, he appeals to themselves: That it was but twelve days since he came up to Jerusalem for to worship;—that during the time, when he purified in the temple, he did it became him, without noise, without tumult; that he calls upon the Jews who came from Asia, and were eye-witnesses of his behavior, to attest; and, in a word, he urges the whole defence before Felix in so strong a manner, and with such plain and natural arguments of his innocence, as to leave no color for his adversaries to reply.

There was, however, still one adversary in the court,—tho' silent, yet not satisfied.——

—Spare thy eloquence, Tertullus! roll up thy charge: A more notable orator than thyself is rising up;——it is AVARICE, and that too, in the most fatal place for the prisoner it could have taken possession of,—it is in the heart of the man who judges him.

If Felix believed Paul innocent, and acted accordingly, that is, released him without reward, this subtle advocate told him he would lose one of the profits of his employment;—and if he acknowledged the faith of CHRIST, which Paul occasionally explained in his defence,—it told him he might lose the employment itself: So, notwithstanding the character of the apostle appeared (as it was) most spotless, and the faith he professed so very clear, that, as he urged it, the heart gave its consent,—yet, at the same time, the passion rebelled, and so strong an interest was formed thereby, against the first impressions in favor of the man and his cause, that both were dismissed; the one to a more convenient hearing, which never came,—the other to the hardships of a p

son for two whole years, hoping, as the text informs us, that money should have been given him; and, even at the last, when he left the province, willing to do the Jews a pleasure,—that is—to serve his interest in another shape,—with all the conviction upon his mind that he had done nothing worthy of bonds, he, nevertheless, left the holy man bound, and, consigned over to the hopeless prospect of ending his days in the same state of confinement in which he had ungenerously left him.

One would imagine, as covetousness is a vice not naturally cruel in itself, that there must certainly have been a mixture of other motives in the governor's breast, to account for a proceeding so contrary to humanity and his own conviction; and, could it be of use to raise conjectures upon it, there seems but too probable grounds for such a supposition. It seems that Drusilla, whose curiosity, upon a double account, had led her to hear Paul—(for she was a daughter of Abraham—as well as of Eve),—was a character, which might have figured very well, even in our own times: For, as Josephus tells us, she had left the Jew her husband, and, without any pretence in their law to justify a divorce, had given herself up, without ceremony, to Felix; for which cause, tho' she is here called his wife, she was, in reason and justice, the wife of another man, and consequently lived in an open state of adultery. So that when Paul, in explaining the faith of CHRIST, took occasion to argue upon the morality of the gospel, and urged the eternal laws of justice, the unchangeable obligations to temperance, of which chastity was a branch, it was scarce possible to frame his discourse so, (had he wished to temporize), but that either her interest or her love must have taken offence: And tho' we do not read, like Felix, that she trembled at the account, it is

natural to imagine she was affected with passions, of which the apostle might feel tl feels;—and it was well he suffered no mo two such violent enemies as Lust and A were combined against him.

But this by the way;——for, as the text s only to acknowledge one of these motives not our business to assign the other.

It is observable, that this same apostle, s ing in his epistle to Timothy, of the ill effe this same ruling passion, affirms, that it is th of all evil; and I make no doubt but the re brance of his own sufferings had no small in the severity of the reflection.—Infinite a examples, where the love of money is only ordinate and ministerial passion, exercis the support of some other vices; and it is rally found, when there is either ambition, pr lity, or lust, to be fed by it, that it then rage the least mercy and discretion; in which strictly speaking, it is not the root of other but other evils are the root of it.

This forces me to recal what I have saic covetousness, as a vice not naturally cruel not apt to represent itself to our imaginati first sight, under that idea; we consider as a mean, worthless turn of mind, incapa judging or doing what is right: But as it is which does not always set up for itself, tc truly what it is in this respect, we must what masters it serves;—they are many, various casts and humors,—and each one l something of its own complexional tint ar racter.

This, I suppose, may be the cause that t a greater and more whimsical mystery in t of money, than in the darkest and most no cal problem that ever was pored on.

Even at the best, and when the passion se

seek nothing more than its own amusement, there is little—very little, I fear, to be said for its humanity. It may be a sport to the miser,—but consider, it must be death and destruction to others. The moment this sordid humor begins to govern—farewell all honest and natural affections! farewell all he owes to parents, to children, to friends!—How fast the obligations vanish!—See!—he is now stripped of all feelings whatever: The shrill cry of justice, and the low lamentation of humble distress, are notes equally beyond his compass. Eternal God! see!—he passes by one whom thou hast bruised, without one pensive reflection; he enters the cabin of the widow whose husband and child thou has taken to thyself—exacts his bond, without a sigh!—Heaven! if I am to be tempted, let it be by glory, by ambition, by some generous and manly vice:—If I must fall, let it be by some passion which thou hast planted in my nature,—which shall not harden my heart, but leave me room at last to retreat and come back to thee.

It would be easy here to add the common arguments which Reason offers against this vice; but they are so well understood, both in matter and form,—it is needless.

I might cite to you what Seneca says upon it—but, the misfortune is, that at the same time he was writing against riches, he was enjoying a great estate, and using every means to make that estate still greater.

With infinite pleasure might a preacher enrich his discourse in this place, by weaving into it all the smart things, which ancient or modern wits have said upon the love of money:——He might inform you,

——"That Poverty wants some things—that "covetousness wanteth all."

"That a miser can only be said to have riches,

"as a sick man has a fever, which holds and ty-
"rannizes over the man—not he over it."

"That covetousness is the shirt of the soul,—
"the last vice it parts with."

"That nature is content with a few things,—
"or that Nature is never satisfied at all," &c.

The reflection of our SAVIOUR, *That the life of man consiteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth*,—speaks more to the heart;—and the single hint of the *camel*, and what a very narrow passage he has to go, has more coercion in it, than all the see-saws of philosophy.

I shall endeavor therefore to draw such other reflections from this piece of sacred story, as are applicable to human life, and more likely to be of use.

There is nothing, generally, in which our happiness and honor are more nearly concerned, than in forming true notions both of men and things—for, in proportion as we think rightly of them, we approve ourselves to the world,—and as we govern ourselves by such judgments, so we secure our peace and well-being in passing thro' it. The false steps and miscarriages in life, issuing from a defect in this capital point, are so many and fatal, that there can be nothing more instructive than an inquiry into the causes of this perversion which often appears so very gross in us, that were you to take a view of the world, see what notions it entertains, and by what consideration it is governed,——you would say of the mistake of human judgment, what the prophet does of human actions,—"*That we were wise to do evil but to judge rightly, had no understanding.*

That in many dark and abstracted questions of mere speculation, we should err,—is not strange: We live amongst mysteries and riddles; and almost every thing which comes in our way, in one light or other, may be said to baffle our under-

standings, yet seldom so as to mistake in extremities, and take one contrary for another. It is very rare, for instance, that we take the virtue of a plant to be hot, when it is extremely cold, or, that we try the experiment of opium to keep us waking; yet this we are continually attempting, in the conduct of life, as well as in the great ends and measures of it. That such wrong determinations in us, do arise from any defect of judgment inevitably misleading us,——would reflect dishonor upon GOD; as if he had made and sent man into the world, on purpose to play the fool. His all bountiful hand, made his judgment, like his heart, upright: And the instances of his sagacity in other things, abundantly confirm it: We are led therefore, in course, to a supposition, that in all consistent instances, there is a secret bias, some how or other, hung upon the mind, which turns it aside from reason and truth.

What this is, if we do not care to search for it in ourselves, we shall find it registered in this transaction of Felix: And we may depend, that, in all wrong judgments whatever, in such plain cases as this, that the same explanation must be given of it, which is given in the text, namely, that it is some selfish consideration—some secret dirty engagement with some little appetite, which does us so much dishonor.

The judgments of the more disinterested and impartial of us, receive no small tincture from our affections: We generally consult them in all doubtful points,—and it happens well, if the matter in question is not almost settled, before the arbitrator is called into the debate: But, in the more flagrant instances, where the passions govern the whole man, it is melancholy to see the office to which Reason, the great prerogative of his nature, is reduced: Serving the lower appetites in the dishonest drudgery of finding out arguments to justify the present pursuit.

To judge rightly of our own worth, we should retire a little from the world, to see all its pleasures——and pains too, in their proper size and dimensions: This, no doubt, was the reason St. Paul, when he intended to convert Felix, began his discourse upon the day of judgment, on purpose to take the heart off from this world and its pleasures, which dishonor the understanding, so as to turn the wisest of men into fools and children.

If you enlarge your observations upon this plan you will find where the evil lies which has supported those desperate opinions which have so long divided the Christian world, and are likely to divide it for ever.

Consider popery well; you will be convinced that the truest definition which can be given of it is, That it is a pecuniary system, well contrived to operate upon men's passions and weakness, whils their pockets are o'picking: Run thro' all the points of difference between us,——and when you see, that, in every one of them, they serve the same end which Felix had in view, either of money or power, there is little room left to doub whence the cloud arises, which is spread over the understanding.

If this reasoning is conclusive, with regard to those who merely differ from us in religion, let us try if it will not hold good with regard to those who have none at all,—or rather, who effect to treat all persuasions of it with ridicule alike. Thanks to good sense, good manners, and a more enlarged knowledge, this humor is going down and seems to be settling, at present, chiefly amongst the inferior classes of people——where it is likely to rest: As for the lowest ranks, the they are apt enough to follow the modes of their betters, yet are not likely to be struck with this one, of making merry with that which is their consolation,—they are too serious a set of people ever heartily to enter into it.——

There is enough, however, of it in the world, to say, that this all-sacred system, which holds the world in harmony and peace, is too often the first object, but the giddy and inconsiderate make choice of, to try the temper of their wits upon. Now, of the numbers who make this experiment, do you believe that one in a thousand does it from conviction, or from arguments, which a course of study, much cool reasoning, and a sober inquiry into antiquity, and the true merits of the question, have furnished him with?——The years and way of life of the most forward of these, lead us to a different explanation.

Religion, which lays so many restraints upon us, is a troublesome companion to those who will lay no restraints upon themselves; and, for this reason, there is nothing more common to be observed, than that the little arguments and cavils, which such men have gathered up against it, in the early part of their lives,—how considerable soever they may have appeared, when viewed thro' their passions and prejudices, which give an unnatural turn to all objects; yet, when the edge of appetite has been worn down, and the heat of the pursuit pretty well over, and reason and judgment have got possession of their empire

——They seldom fail of bringing the lost sheep back to the fold.

May God bring us all there. *Amen.*

SERMON XX.

The Prodigal Son.

LUKE xv. 13.

And not many days after, the younger son gathered he had together, and took his journey into far country.—

I KNOW not whether the remark is to our h nor, or otherwise,—that lessons of wisdo have never such power over us, as when they a wrought into the heart, though the groundwo of a story which engages the passions. Is it, th we are like iron, and must first be heated befo we can be wrought upon? or, is the heart so i love with deceit, that where a true report will nc reach it, we must cheat it with a fable, in order t come at truth?

Whether this parable of the prodigal—(for so i is usually called) is really such, or built upo some story known at that time in Jerusalem, i not much to the purpose; it is given us to enlarg upon, and turn to the best moral account we ca

"A certain man, says our SAVIOUR, had tw "sons; and the younger of them said to his fa "ther, Give me the portion of goods which fall "to me: And he divided unto them his substance "And not many days after, the younger son ga "thered all together, and took his journey int "a far country, and there wasted his substanc "with riotous living."

The account is short: The interesting and pa thetic passages with which such a transactio would be necessarily connected, are left to be sup plied by the heart: The story is silent——but na ture is not; Much kind advice, and many a ten

der expostulation would fall from the father's lips, no doubt, upon this occasion.

He would dissuade his son from the folly of so rash an enterprize, by showing him the dangers of the journey, the inexperience of his age,—The hazards his life, his fortune, his virtue would run, without a guide, without a friend: He would tell him of the many snares and temptations which he had to avoid, or encounter, at every step,—the pleasures which would solicit him in every luxurious court, the little knowledge he could gain—except that of evil: He would speak of the seductions of women,—their charms, their poisons,—what helpless indulgencies he might give way to, when far from restraint, and the check of giving his father pain.

The dissuasive would but inflame his desire.

He gathers all together.——

——I see the picture of his departure:——The camels and asses loaded with his substance, detached on one side of the piece, and already on their way: The prodigal son standing on the foreground, with a forced sedateness, struggling against the fluttering movement of joy, upon his deliverance from restraint: The elder brother holding his hand, as if unwilling to let it go:—The father,—sad moment! with a firm look covering a prophetic sentiment, "that all would not go "well with his child,"—approaching to embrace him, and bid him adieu. Poor inconsiderate youth! From whose arms art thou flying! From what shelter art thou going forth into the storm? Art thou weary of a father's affection, of a father's care? or, hopest thou to find a warmer interest, a truer counsellor, or a kinder friend, in a land of strangers, where youth is made a prey, and so many thousands are confederated to deceive them, and live by their spoils?

We will seek no father than this idea for the

extravagancies by which the prodigal son added one unhappy example to the number: His fortune wasted, the followers of it fled in course, the wants of nature remain,—the hand of GOD gone forth against him—"*For when he had spent all, a mighty famine arose in that country.*"—Heaven have pity upon the youth, for he is in hunger and distress, strayed out of the reach of a parent, who counts every hour of his absence with anguish,—cut off from all his tender offices, by his folly and from relief and charity from others, by the calamity of the times.

Nothing so powerfully calls home the mind as distress: The tense fibre then relaxes, the soul retires to itself, sits pensive and susceptible of right impressions. If we have a friend, it is then we think of him: If a benefactor, at that moment all his kindnesses press upon our mind. Gracious and bountiful GOD! Is it not for this, that they who in their prosperity forget thee, do yet remember and return to thee in the hour of their sorrow? When our heart is in heaviness, upon whom can we think but Thee, who knowest our necessities afar off, putest all our tears in thy bottle, seest every careful thought, hearest every sigh and melancholy groan we utter?

Strange!—that we should only begin to think of GOD with comfort, when with joy and comfort we can think of nothing else.

Man surely is a compound of riddles and contradictions: By the law of his nature, he avoids pain, and yet, *unless he suffers in the flesh, he will not cease from sin*, though it is sure to bring pain and misery upon his head for ever.

Whilst all went pleasurably on with the prodigal, we hear not one word concerning his father—no pang of remorse from the sufferings in which he had left him, or resolution of returning, to make up the account of his folly: His first hour

of distress, seemed to be his first hour of wisdom ——*When he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare, wildst I perish!*——

Of all the terrors of nature, that of one day or another dying by hunger, is the greatest; and it is wisely wove into our frame, to awaken man to industry and call forth his talents; and though we seem to go on carelessly, sporting with it as we do with other terrors——yet He that sees this enemy fairly, and in his most frightful shape, will need no long remonstrance, to make him turn out of the way to avoid him.

It was the case of the prodigal:—He arsoe to go unto his father.——

—Alas! how shall he tell his story!—Ye who have trod this round, tell me in what words he shall give in to his father the sad *Items* of his extravagance and folly?

——The feasts and banquets which he gave to whole cities in the east,—the costs of Asiatic rarities, and of Asiatic cooks to dress them,—the expenses of singing men and singing women, the flute, the harp, the sackbut, and of all kinds of music—The dress of the Persian courts, how magnificent! their slaves, how numerous! their chariots, their horses, their palaces, their furniture, what immense sums they had devoured! what expectations from strangers of condition! what exactions!

How shall the youth make his father comprehend, that he was cheated at Damascus by one of the best men in the world; that he had lent a part of his substance to a friend at Nineveh, who had fled off with it to the Ganges; that a whore of Babylon had swallowed his best pearl, and anointed the whole city with his balm of Gilead; that he had been sold by a man of honor for twenty shekles of silver, to a worker in graven

images; that the images he had purchased had profited him nothing; that they could not be transported across the wilderness, and had been burnt with fire at Shusan; that the apes* and peacocks, which he had sent for from Tarsus, lay dead upon his hands; and that the mummies had not been dead long enough which he had brought him out of Egypt: That all had gone wrong, since the day he forsook his father's house?

——Leave the story——it will be told more concisely.——*When he was yet afar off, his father saw him.*——Compassion told it in three words ——*he fell upon his neck, and kissed him.*

Great is the power of eloquence: But never is it so great as when it pleads along with nature, and the culprit is a child strayed from his duty, and returned to it again with tears. Casuists may settle the point as they will—But what could a parent see more in the account, than the natural one, of an ingenuous heart too open for the world, smitten with strong sensations of pleasure, and suffered to sally forth unarmed into the midst of enemies stronger than himself?

Generosity sorrows as much for the overmatched, as pity herself does.

The idea of a son so ruined, would double the father's caresses; every effusion of his tenderness, would add bitterness to his sons remorse. ——"Gracious heaven! what a father have I "rendered miserable!"

And he said, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

But the father said, Bring forth the best robe.

O, ye affections! how fondly do ye play at cross-purposes with each other?—It is the natural dialogue of true transport: Joy is not methodical; and where an offender, beloved, over-

* *Vide 2 Chronicles*, IX. 21.

charges itself in the offence,——words are too cold, and a conciliated heart replies by tokens of esteem.

And he said unto his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet, and bring hither the fatted calf, and let us eat and drink and be merry.

When the affections so kindly break loose, Joy is another name for Religion.

We look up as we taste it—The cold stoic without, when he hears the dancing and the music, many ask sullenly, with the elder brother, What it means? and refuse to enter: But the humane and compassionate all fly impetuously to the banquet given *for a son who was dead, and is alive again,—who was lost, and is found.* Gentle spirits, light upon the pavilion with a sacred fire; and, parental love, and filial piety, lead in the mask with riot and wild festivity! Was it not for this that GOD gave man music to strike upon the kindly passions—that nature taught the feet to dance to its movements, and, as chief governess of the feast, poured forth wine into the goblet, to crown it with gladness?

The intention of this parable is so clear, from the occasion of it, that it will not be necessary to perplex it with any tedious explanation: It was designed by way of indirect remonstrance to the Scribes and Pharisees, who animadverted upon our SAVIOUR'S conduct, for entering so freely into conferences with sinners, in order to reclaim them. To that end, he proposes the parable of the shepherd, who left his ninety and nine sheep, that were safe in the fold, to go and seek for one sheep that was gone astray, telling them, in other places, that they who were whole, wanted not a physician,—but they that were sick: And here, to carry on the same lesson, and to prove how acceptable such a recovery was to GOD, he relates

this account of the prodigal son, and his welcome reception.

I know not whether it would be a subject of much edification, to convince you, here, that our SAVIOUR, by the prodigal son, particularly pointed at those who were *sinners of the Gentiles*, and were recovered, by divine grace, to repentance —and that, by the elder brother, he intended a manifestly the more froward of the Jews, who envied their conversion, and thought it a kind of wrong to their primogeniture, in being made fellow-heirs with them of the promises of GOD.

These uses have been so ably set forth, in so many good sermons upon the prodigal son, that I shall turn aside from them, at present, and content myself with some reflections upon the fatal passion which led him, and so many thousands after the example, *to gather all he had together, and take his journey into a far country.*

The love of variety, or curiosity of seeing new things, which is the same—or, at least, a sister-passion to it, seems wove into the frame of every son and daughter of Adam;—we usually speak of it as one of nature's levities, tho' planted within us for the solid purposes of carrying forwards the mind to fresh inquiry and knowledge: Strip us of it, the mind (I fear) would doze for ever over the present page; and we should all of us rest at ease with such objects as presented themselves in the parish or province where we first drew our breath.

It is to this spur, which is ever in our sides, that we owe the impatience of this desire for travelling: The passion is no way bad, but, as others, in its mismanagement or excess: Order it rightly, the advantages are worth the pursuit; the chief of which are——to learn the languages, the laws and customs, and understand the governments and *interest* of other nations;—to acquire an urbanity *and* confidence of behavior and fit the mind

more easily for conversation and discourse ;—to take us out of the company of our aunts and grandmothers, and from the track of nursery mistakes ; and, by showing us new objects, or old ones in new lights, to reform our judgment ;——by tasting perpetually the varieties of nature, to know what *is good* ;——by observing the address and arts of men, to conceive what is *sincere* ;——and, by seeing the difference of so many various humors and manners—to look into ourselves, and form our own.

This is some part of the cargo we might return with ; but the impulse of seeing new sights, augmented with that of getting clear from all lessons both of wisdom and reproof at home——carries our youth too early out, to turn this venture to much account ; on the contrary, if the scene painted of the prodigal in his travels, looks more like a copy than an original—Will it not be well, if such an adventurer, with so unpromising a setting out,—without *carte*—without compass,—be not cast away for ever—and may he not be said to escape well—if he returns to his country, only as naked as he first left it ?

But you will send an able pilot with your son ——a scholar.——

If wisdom can speak in no other language but Greek or Latin——you do well ;——or, if mathematics will make a man a gentleman——or natural philosophy but teach him to make a bow, ——he may be of some service, in introducing your son into good societies, and supporting him in them when he has done :——But the upshot will be generally this, That, in the most pressing occasions of address——if he is a mere man of reading, the unhappy youth will have the tutor to carry,——and not the tutor to carry him.

But you will avoid this extreme ;—he shall be escorted by *one who knows* the world, not mere-

om books—but from his own experience:—
an who has been employed on such services
thrice made the *tour of Europe with success*——
—That is, without breaking his own or hi
oil's neck;—for, if he is such as my eyes hav
n! some broken *Swiss valet de chambre*,—som
neral undertaker, who will perform the journe
so many months, "IF GOD PERMIT"—muc
nowledge will not accrue:—Some profit at leas
—he will learn the amount, to a halfpenny,
very stage from Calais to Rome;—he will
carried to the best inns, instructed where there
the best wine, and sup a livre cheaper than
the youth had been left to make the tour and
bargain himself. Look at our governor! I besee
you:—See, he is an inch taller as he relates t
advantages——
—And here endeth his pride, his knowledge
and his use.

But when your son gets abroad, he will be ta
ken out of his hand, by his society with men
rank and letters, with whom he will pass th
greatest part of his time.

Let me observe in the first place, that compa
which is really good, is very rare—and very sh
—But you have surmounted this difficulty; and p
cured him the best letters of recommendatio
the most eminent and respectable in every capi

And I answer, That he will obtain all by t
which courtesy strictly stands obliged to pa
such occasions,——but no more.

There is nothing in which we are so muc
ceived, as in the advantages proposed fro
connections and discourse with the literati, &
foreign parts; especially if the experi
made before we are matured by years or st

Conversation is a traffic; and if you en
it, without some stock of knowledge, to
the account perpetually betwixt you——t

drops at once: And this is the reason——how ever it may be boasted to the contrary, why travellers have so little (especially good) conversation with natives, owing to their suspicion, or, perhaps, conviction, that there is nothing to be extracted from the conversation of young itinerants, worth the trouble of their bad language, or the interruption of their visits.

The pain, on these occasions, is usually reciprocal; the consequence of which is, that the disappointed youth seeks an easier society; and, as bad company is always ready, and ever lying in wait, the career is soon finished; and the poor prodigal returns the same object of pity, with the prodigal in the gospel.

SERMON XXI.

National Miseries, considered.

On the inauguration of his present Majesty.

DEUTERONOMY vi. 20, 21.

And when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord our God hath commanded you? then thou shalt say unto thy son, We were Pharaoh's bondsmen in Egypt, and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand.

THESE are the words which Moses left as a standing answer for the children of Israel to give their posterity, who, in time to come, might become ignorant or unmindful of the many and great mercies which GOD had vouchsafed to their forefathers;—all which had terminated in that one, of their deliverance out of bondage.

Though they were directed to speak in this manner, each man to his son, yet one cannot suppose, that the direction would be necessary for the next generation——for the children of those who had been eye-witnesses of *GOD's* providences: It does not seem likely, that any of them should arrive to that age of reasoning, which would put them upon asking the supposed question, and not be, long before-hand, instructed in the answer.—Every parent would tell his child the hardships of his captivity, and the amazing particulars of his deliverance:—The story was so uncommon, full of wonder, and, withal, the recital of it would ever be a matter of such transport, it could not possibly be kept a secret:—The piety and gratitude of one generation, would anticipate the curiosity of another;—their sons would learn the story with their language.

This, probably, might be the case with the first or second race of people;—but, in process of time, things might take a different turn:—A long and undisturbed possession of their liberties, might blunt the sense of those providences of GOD which had procured them, and set the remembrance of all his mercies at too great a distance from their hearts. After they had, for some years, been eased of every real burden, an excess of freedom might make them restless under every imaginary one, and, amongst others, that of their religion:—From thence, they might seek occasion to inquire into the foundation and fitness of its ceremonies, its statutes, and its judgments.

They might ask, What meant so many commands, in matters, which, to them, appeared indifferent in their own natures?—What policy, in ordaining them?—and, What obligation could here lie upon reasonable creatures, to comply with a multitude of such unaccountable injunctions, so unworthy the wisdom of GOD?

Hereafter, possibly, they might go farther engths;—and, tho' their natural bent was generally towards superstition, yet, some adventurers, as is ever the case, might steer for the opposite coast, and, as they advanced, might discover that all religions, of what denominations or complexions soever, were alike:—That the religion of their own country, in particular, was a contrivance of the priests and Levites;—a phantom, dressed out in a terrifying garb of their own making, to keep weak minds in fear:—That its rites and ceremonies, and numberless injunctions, were so many different wheels in the same political engine, put in, no doubt, to amuse the ignorant, and keep them in such a state of darkness as clerical juggling requires.

That, as for the moral part of it,—tho' it was unexceptionable in itself, yet it was a piece of in-

telligence they did not stand in want of;—men had natural reason always to have found it out, and wisdom to have practised it, without Moses's assistance.

Nay, possibly, in process of time, they might arrive at greater improvements in religious controversy:—When they had given their system of infidelity all the strength it could admit of from reason, they might begin to embellish it with some more sprightly conceits and turns of ridicule.

Some wanton Israelite, when he had eaten, and was full, might give free scope and indulgence to this talent:—As arguments and sober reasoning failed, he might turn the edge of his wit against types and symbols, and treat all the mysteries of his religion, and every thing that could be said upon so serious a subject, with raillery and mirth:—He might give vent to a world of pleasantry upon many sacred passages of his law: He might banter the golden calf, or the brazen serpent, with great courage,—and confound himself in the distinctions of clean and unclean beasts by the desperate sallies of his wit against them.

He could but possibly take one step farther.—When the land which flowed with milk and honey had quite worn out the impressions of his yoke, and blessings began to multiply upon his hands, he might draw this curious conclusion,—That there was no Being who was the author and bestower of them,—but that it was their own arm, and the mightiness of Israelitish strength, which had put them, and kept them, in possession of so much happiness.

O Moses! how would thy meek and patient spirit have been put to the torture by such a return?—If a propensity towards superstition in the Israelites, did once betray thee into an excess of anger, that thou threwest the two tables out of

thy hands, which GOD had wrote, and carelessly hazardedst the whole treasure of the world,—— with what indignation and honest anguish, wouldst thou have heard the scoffings of those who denied the hand which brought them forth, and said, Who is GOD, that we should obey his voice?— With what force and vivacity wouldst thou have reproached them with the history of their own nation?—That, if too free an enjoyment of GOD's blessings, had made them forget to look backwards, it was necessary to remind them, that their forefathers were Pharaoh's bondsmen in Egypt, without prospect of deliverance:—That the chains of their captivity had been fixed and rivetted by a succession of four hundred and thirty years, without the interruption of one struggle for their liberty:—That after the expiration of that hopeless period, when no natural means favored the event, they were snatched, almost against their own wills, out of the hands of their oppressors, and led, thro' an ocean of dangers, to the possession of a land of plenty:—That this change in their affairs, was not the produce of chance or fortune, nor was it projected or executed by any achievement or plan of human device, which might soon again be defeated by superior strength or policy from without, or from force or accidents from within,—from change of circumstances, humors and passions of men, all which generally had a sway in the rise and fall of kingdoms,—but that all was brought about by the power and goodness of GOD, who saw and pitied the afflictions of a distressed people, and, by a chain of great and mighty deliverances, set them free from the yoke of oppression.

That since that miraculous escape, a series of successes not to be accounted for by second causes and the natural course of events, had demonstrated not only GOD's providence in general, but

his particular providence and attachment to th
that nations, greater and mightier than they,
driven out before them, and their lands giv
them for an everlasting possession.

This was what they should teach their chil
and their childrens children after them.—H
generations, for whom so joyful a lesson was
pared !—happy indeed ! had ye at all times k
to have made the use of it, which Moses cor
ally exhorted,—*of drawing nigh unto God wi
your hearts, who had been so nigh unto you.*

And here let us drop the argument, as
spects the Jews, and for a moment turn
wards ourselves ; the present occasion, an
recollection which is natural upon it, of the
other parts of this complicated blessing v
safed to us, since we became a nation, maki
hard to desist from such an application.

I begin with the first in order of time, a
as the greatest of national deliverances—o
liverance from darkness and idolatry, by th
veyance of the light which Christianity br
with it into Britain, so early as in the lifeti
the apostles themselves,——or, at farthes
many years after their death.

Tho' this might seem a blessing conveye
offered to us in common with other parts
world, yet, when you reflect upon this as a r
corner of the earth, in respect to Judea ; it
tuation and inaccessibleness as an island ; t
tle that was then known of navigation, or c
on of commerce ; the large tract of land, v
to this day, remains unhallowed with the
of CHRIST, and almost within the neighbo
of where the first glad tidings of him were s
ed :—One cannot but adore the goodness of
and remark a more particular providence
conveyance and establishment here, than am
other nations upon the continent,——wher

the oppositions from error and prejudice were equal, it had not these natural impediments to encounter.

Historians and statesmen, who generally search every where for the causes of events, but in the pleasure of Him who disposes of them, may make different reflections upon this. They may consider it as a matter incidental, brought to pass by the fortuitous ambition, success and settlement of the Romans here; it appearing, that, in Claudius's reign, when Christianity began to get footing in Rome, that near eighty thousand of that city and people were fixed in this island: As this made a free communication betwixt the two places, the way for the gospel was in course open, and its transition from the one to the other, natural and easy to be accounted for—and yet, nevertheless providential. God often suffers us to pursue the devices of our hearts, whilst he turns the course of them, like the rivers of waters, to bountiful purposes. Thus, he might make that pursuit of glory inherent in the Romans, the engine to advance his own, and establish it here: He might make the wickedness of the earth to work his own righteousness, by suffering them to wander a while beyond their proper bounds, till his purposes were fulfilled, and *then put his hook into their nostrils*, and lead those wild beasts of prey back again into their own land.

Next to this blessing of the light of the gospel, we must not forget that by which it was preserved from the danger of being totally smothered and extinguished, by that vast swarm of barbarous nations, which came down upon us from the north, and shook the world like a tempest; changing names and customs, and language and government, and almost the very face of nature, wherever they fixed. That our religion should be preserved at all, when every thing else seemed to pe-

rish, which was capable of change,—or, that it should not be hurt under that mighty weight of ruins, beyond the recovery of its former beauty and strength,—the whole can be ascribed to no cause so likely as this, That the same power of GOD which sent it forth, was present to support it, when the whole frame of other things gave way.

Next in degree to this mercy of preserving Christianity from an utter extinction, we must reckon that of being enabled to preserve, and free it from corruptions, which the rust of time, the abuses of men, and the natural tendency of all things to degeneracy, which are trusted to them, had from time to time introduced into it.

Since the day in which this reformation was begun, by how many strange and critical turns has it been perfected and handed down, if not *entirely without spot or wrinkle*, at least, without great blotches or marks of anility!

Even the blow which was suffered to fall upon it shortly after, in that period where our history looks so unlike herself,—stained Mary, by thee! and disfigured with blood;—can one reflect upon it, without adoring the Providence of GOD, which so speedily snatched the sword of persecution out of her hand, making her reign as short as it was merciless?

If GOD then made us, as he did the Israelites, suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock,—how much more signal was his mercy, in giving them to us without money, without price, in those good days which followed, when a long and a wise reign was as necessary to build up our church, as a short one was before to save it from ruin!——

——The blessing was necessary,——

——and it was granted——

GOD having multiplied the years of that renowned princess to an uncommon number, giving her

time, as well as a heart, to fix a wavering persecuted people, and settle them upon such a foundation as must make them happy; the touch-stone by which they are to be tried, whom GOD has entrusted with the care of kingdoms.

Blessed be thy glorious name for ever and ever, in making that test so much easier for the British, than other princes of this earth; whose subjects, whatever other changes they have felt, have seldom happened upon that of changing their misery, and it is to be feared, are never likely, so long as they are kept so strongly bound in chains of darkness,——and chains of power.

From both these kinds of evils, which are almost naturally connected together, how providential was our escape in the succeeding reign, when all the choice blood was bespoke, and preparations made to offer it up at one sacrifice!

I would not intermix the horrors of that black projected festival with the glories of this, or name the sorrows of the next reign, which ended in the subversion of our constitution, was it not necessary to pursue the thread of our deliverances thro' those times, and remark how nigh GOD's Providence was to us in them both, by protecting us from the one, in as signal a manner as he restored us from the other.

Indeed, the latter of them might have been a joyless matter of remembrance to us at this day, had it not been confirmed a blessing, by a succeeding escape, which sealed and conveyed it safe down to us: Whether it was to correct an undue sense of former blessings,——or to teach us to reflect upon the number and value of them, by threatening us with the deprivation of them,—— we were suffered, however, to approach the edge of a precipice, where, if GOD had not raised up a deliverer to lead us back—all had been lost:—— The arts of Jesuitry had decoyed us forwards, or,

if that had failed, we had been pushed down by open force, and our destruction had been inevitable.

The good consequences of that deliverance are such, that it seemed as if God had suffered our waters, like those of Bethesda, to be troubled, to make them afterwards more healing to us; since to the account of that day's blessing, we charge the enjoyment of every thing since, worth a freeman's living for,——the revival of our liberty, our religion; the just rights of our kings,—— and the just rights of our people;—and, along with all, that happy provision for their continuance, for which we are returning thanks to God this day.

Let us do it, I beseech you, in the way which becomes wise men, by pursuing the intentions of his blessings, and making a better use of them than our forefathers, who sometimes seemed to grow weary of their own happiness:——Let us rather thank God for the good land which he has given us; and when we begin to prosper in it, and have built goodly houses, and dwelt therein, ——and when our silver and our gold is multiplied, and all that we have is multiplied, let the instances of our virtue and benevolence be multiplied with them, that the great and almighty God, who is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works, may in the last day of accounting with us, judge us worthy of the mercies we have received.

In vain are days set apart to celebrate successful occurrences, unless they influence a nation's morals.——A sinful people never can be grateful to God,—nor can they, properly speaking, be loyal to their prince;——they cannot be grateful to the one,—because they live not under a sense of his mercies;——nor can they be loyal to the other, because they disengage the providence of God from taking his part,——and then giving a heart to his adversaries to be intractable.——

And therefore, what was said by some one, that every sin was a treason against the soul, may be applied here,——That every wicked man is a traitor to his king and his country. And, whatever statesmen may write of the causes of the rise and fall of nations; for the contrary reasons, a good man will ever be found to be the best patriot, and the best subject. And tho' an individual may say, What can my righteousness profit a nation of men? it may be answered, That if it should fail of a blessing here,———it will have one advantage, at least, which is this,———

It will save thy own soul; which, may GOD grant. *Amen.*

SERMON XXII.

The History of Jacob considered.

GENESIS XLVII. 9.

And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage, are an hundred and thirty years: —Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been.——

THERE is not a man in history, whom I pity more, than the man who made this reply;—not because his days were short—but that they were long enough to have crowded into them so much evil as we find.

Of all the patriarchs, he was the most unhappy; for, bating the seven years he served Laban for Rachel, "*which seemed to him but a few days, for the love he had to her*,"—strike those out of the number—all his other days were sorrow; and that, not from his faults, but from the ambition, the violences, and evil passions of others: A large portion of what man is born to, comes, you will say, from the same quarter:—It is true;—but still, in some men's lives, there seems a contexture of misery;—one evil so rises out of another, and the whole plan and execution of the piece has so very melancholy an air, that a good-natured man shall not be able to look upon it, but with tears on his cheeks.

I pity this patriarch still the more, because, from his first setting out in life, he had been led into an expectation of such different scenes:—He was told by Isaac his father, that "God should "bless him with the dew of heaven, and the fat-"ness of the earth, and with plenty of corn and "wine:—That people were to serve him, and na-"tions to bow down to him:—That he should be "lord over his brethren:—That blessed was every "one that blessed him, and cursed was every one "who cursed him."

The simplicity of youth takes promises of happiness in the fullest latitude ;—and, as these were moreover confirmed to him by the GOD of his father's, on his way to Padan-aram,—it would leave no distrust of their accomplishment upon his mind :—Every fair and flattering object before him, which wore the face of joy, he would regard as a portion of his blessing ;—he would pursue it——he would grasp a shadow.

This, by the way, makes it necessary to suppose, that the blessings which were conveyed, had a view to blessings not altogether such as a carnal mind would expect ; but that they were, in a great measure, spiritual, and such as the prophetic soul of Isaac had principally before him, in the comprehensive idea of their future and happy establishment, when they were no longer to be strangers and pilgrims upon earth :...For, in fact, in the strict and literal sense of his father's grant,—Jacob enjoyed it not ; and was so far from being a happy man, that, in the most interesting passages of his life, he met with nothing but disappointments and grievous afflictions.

Let us accompany him from the first treacherous hour of a mother's ambition ; in consequence of which, he is driven forth from his country, and the protection of his house, to seek protection and an establishment in the house of Laban his kinsman.

In what manner this answered his expectations, we find from his own pathetic remonstrance to Laban, when he had pursued him seven days journey, and overtook him on mount Gilead.—I see him in the door of the tent, with the calm courage which innocence gives the oppressed, thus remonstrating to his father-in-law upon the cruelty of his treatment.

" These twenty years that I have been with " thee,—the ewes have not cast their young, and " the rams *of thy flock* have I not eaten. That

"which was torn of beasts, I brought not unto "thee,—I bare the loss of it; what was stolen by "day, or stolen by night, of my hands didst thou "require it. Thus I was:—In the day the drought "consumed me, and the frost by night, and my "sleep departed from my eyes. Thus have I been "twenty years in thy house:—I served thee four-"teen years for thy two daughters, and six years "for thy cattle; and thou hast changed my wa-"ges ten times."

Scarce had he recovered from these evils, when the ill conduct and vices of his children, wound his soul to death.—Reuben proves incestuous,—Judah adulterous,—his daughter Dinah is dishonored,—Simeon and Levi dishonored themselves by treachery, two of his grandchildren are stricken with sudden death,—Rachel, his beloved wife, perishes, and in circumstances which embittered his loss, his son Joseph, a most promising youth, is torn from him, by the envy of his brethren; and to close all, himself driven by famine, in his old age, to die amongst the Egyptians, a people who held it an abomination to eat bread with him.—Unhappy patriarch!—well might he say, *That few and evil had been his days.* The answer, indeed, was extended beyond the monarch's inquiry, which was simply his age;—but how could he look back upon the days of his pilgrimage, without thinking of the sorrows which those days had brought along with them?—All that was more in the answer than in the demand, was the overflowings of a heart ready to bleed afresh at the recollection of what had befallen.

Unwillingly does the mind digest the evils prepared for it by others;—for, those we prepare ourselves,—we eat but the fruit which we have planted and watered;—a shattered fortune—a shattered frame, so we have but the satisfaction of shattering them ourselves, pass naturally enough

into the habit, and, by the ease with which they are both done, they save the spectator a world of pity :—But those like Jacob's, brought upon him —by the hands from which he looked for all his comforts,—the avarice of a parent—the unkindness of a relation—the ingratitude of a child,—they are evils which leave a scar ;—besides, as they hang over the heads of all, and therefore may fall upon any,—every looker on has an interest in the tragedy ;...but then we are apt to interest ourselves no otherwise, than merely as the incidents themselves strike our passions, without carrying the lesson farther :—In a word—we realize nothing,—we sigh—we wipe away the tear,—and there ends the story of misery, and the moral with it.

Let us try to do better with this. To begin with the bad bias which gave the whole turn to the patriarch's life,—parental partiality—or parental injustice,—it matters not by what title it stands distinguished—it is that, by which Rebekah planted a dagger in Esau's breast, and an eternal terror with it in her own, lest she should live to be deprived of them both in one day ;—and trust me, dear Christians, wherever that equal balance of kindness and love, which children look up to you for, as their natural right, is no longer maintained —there will daggers ever be planted ; "the son "shall literally be set at variance against his father, "and the daughter against her mother, and the "daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law ; and "a man's foes shall be they of his own houshold."

It was an excellent ordinance, as well of domestic policy, as of equity, which Moses gave upon this head, in the 21st of Deuteronomy.

"If a man have two wives, one beloved and one "hated, and they have born him children, both "the beloved and the hated, and if the first born "son be hers that was hated, then it shall be, "when he maketh his sons to inherit that which

" he hath, that he may not make the son of the " beloved first-born, before the son of the hated, " which is indeed the first born,—but he shall ac- " knowledge the son of the hated for first born, " by giving him a double portion of all that he " hath." The evil was well fenced against—for it is one of those which steals in upon the heart with the affections, and courts the parent under so sweet a form, that thousands have been betrayed by the very virtues which should have preserved them. Nature tells the parent, there can be no error on the side of affection;—but we forget, when Nature pleads for one, she pleads for every child alike—and, Why is not her voice to be heard? Solomon says, Oppression will make a wise man mad. What will it do then, to a tender and ingenuous heart, which feels itself neglected,—too full of reverence for the author of its wrongs, to complain? —See, it sits down in silence; robbed, by discouragements, of all its natural powers to please,— born to see others loaded with caresses—in some uncheary corner it nourishes its discontent,—and with a weight upon its spirits which its little stock of fortitude is not able to withstand—it droops and pines away.—Sad victim of caprice!

We are unavoidably led here into a reflection upon Jacob's conduct in regard to his son Joseph, which no way corresponded with the lesson of wisdom, which the miseries of his own family might have taught him: Surely his eyes had seen sorrows sufficient on that score, to have taken warning: And yet we find, that he fell into the same snare of partiality to that child, in his old age, which his mother Rebekah had shown to him, in hers, —" for Israel loved Joseph more than all his chil- " dren, because he was the son of his old age, " and he made him a coat of many colors." O Israel! where was that prophetic spirit which darted into future times, and told each tribe what

was to be its fate—Where was it fled—that it could not aid thee to look so little a way forwards, as to behold *this coat of many colors* stained with blood? Why were the tender emotions of a parent's anguish hid from thy eyes?—and, why is every thing?—but that it pleases heaven to give us no more light in our way, than will leave virtue in possession of its recompense——

—Grant me, gracious God! to go cheerfully on the road which thou hast marked out,—I wish it neither more wide or more smooth: Continue the light of this dim taper thou hast put into my hands: —I will kneel upon the ground seven times a day, to seek the best track I can with it—and, having done that, I will trust myself, and the issue of my journey, to Thee, who art the fountain of joy,— and will sing songs of comfort as I go along.

Let us proceed to the second great concurrence in the patriarch's life—the imposition of a wife upon him, which he neither bargained for, or loved. "And it came to pass in the morning, behold it was "Leah! and he said unto Laban, What is this that "thou hast done unto me? Did I not serve thee for "Rachel? wherefore then hast thou beguiled me?"

This, indeed, is out of the system of all conjugal impositions now,—but the moral of it is still good, and the abuse, with the same complaint of Jacob's upon it, will ever be repeated, so long as art and artifice are so busy as they are in these affairs.

Listen, I pray you, to the stories of the disappointed in marriage:—Collect all their complaints —hear their mutual reproaches; upon what fatal hinge do the greatest part of them turn?—"They were mistaken in the person."—Some disguise, either of body or mind, is seen through in the first domestic scuffle:—Some fair ornament—perhaps the very one which won the heart,—*the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit*, falls off:—*It is not the Rachel for whom I have served—Why hast thou beguiled me.*

Be open—be honest: Give yourself for what you are; conceal nothing—varnish nothing;—and if these fair weapons will not do,—better not conquer at all, than conquer for a day:—When the night is passed, it will ever be the same story,—*And it came to pass, behold it was Leah!*

If the heart beguiles itself in its choice, and imagination will give excellencies which are not the portion of flesh and blood:——When the dream is over, and we awake in the morning, it matters little whether it is Rachel or Leah!——be the object what it will, as it must be on the earthly side, at least, of perfection,——it will fall short of the work of fancy, whose existence is in the clouds.

In such cases of deception, let no man exclaim as Jacob does in his,——*What is it thou hast done unto me?*——for it is his own doings, and he has nothing to lay his fault on, but the heat and poetic indiscretion of his passions.

I know not whether it is of any use, to take notice of this singularity in the patriarch's life, in regard to the wrong he received from Laban, which was the very wrong he had done before to his father Isaac, when the infirmities of old age had disabled him from distinguishing one child from another—*Art thou my very son Esau? and he said, I am.* It is doubtful whether Leah's veracity was put to the same test,—but both suffered from a similitude of stratagem; and it is hard to say, whether the anguish, from crossed love, in the breast of one brother might not be as sore a punishment as the disquietudes of crossed ambition and revenge in the breast of the other.

I do not see which way the honor of Providence is concerned in repaying us exactly in our own coin,——or, why a man should fall into that very pit (and no other) which he has *graven and digged for another man.* Time and chance may bring such incidents about; and there wants nothing, but that

Jacob should have been a bad man, to have made this a common-place text for such a doctrine.

It is enough for us, that the best way to escape evil, is in general, not to commit it ourselves—and that, whenever the passions of mankind will order it otherwise, to rob those, at least, *who love judgment*, of the triumph of finding it out,—*That our travail has returned upon our heads, and our violent dealings upon our own pates.*

I cannot conclude this discourse, without returning first to the part with which it set out, the patriarch's account to the king of Egypt, of the shortness and misery of his days——Give me leave to bring this home to us, by a single reflection upon each.

There is something strange in it, that life should appear so short *in the gross*—and yet so long *in the detail.* Misery may make it so, you will say: ——But we will exclude it;——and still you will find, tho' we all complain of the shortness of life, what numbers there are who seem quite overstocked with the days and hours of it, and are continually sending out into the highways and streets of the city, to compel guests to come in, and take it off their hands. To do this with ingenuity and forecast, is not one of the least arts and businesses of life itself: And they who cannot succeed in it, carry as many marks of distress about with them, as bankruptcy herself could wear. Be as careless as we may, we shall not always have the power,—nor shall we always be in a temper to let the account run thus. When the blood is cooled, and the spirits, which have hurried us on thro' half our days, before we have numbered one of them, are beginning to retire;—then Wisdom will press a moment to be heard,——afflictions, or a bed of sickness, will find their hours of persuasion——and, should they fail——there is something yet behind,——old age will overtake us at

the last, and with its trembling hand, hold up the glass to us, as it did unto the patriarch.——

——Dear, inconsiderate Christians! wait not, I beseech you, till then;——take a view of your life now;——look back;—behold this fair space, capable of such heavenly improvements——all scrawled over and defaced with———

——I want words to say, with what——for I think only of the reflections with which you are to support yourselves, in the decline of a life so miserably cast away, should it happen, as it often does, that ye have stood idle unto the eleventh hour, and have all the work of the day to perform when night comes on, and no one can work.

2dly, As to the evil of the days of the years of our pilgrimage—speculation and fact appear at variance again. We agree with the patriarch, that the life of man is miserable; and yet the world looks happy enough—and every thing tolerably at its ease. It must be noted, indeed, that the patriarch, in this account, speaks merely his present feelings, and seems rather to be giving a history of his sufferings, than a system of them, in contradiction to that of the God of love. Look upon the world he has given us,—observe the riches and plenty which flow in every channel, not only to satisfy the desires of the temperate, but of the fanciful and wanton; every place is almost a paradise, planted when nature was in her gayest humor.

——Every thing has two views. Jacob, and Job, and Solomon, gave one section of the globe,—— and this representation another:—Truth lieth betwixt—or rather, good and evil are mixed together. Which of the two preponderates, is beyond our inquiry;—but, I trust——it is the good:—— First, as it renders the Creator of the world more dear and venerable to me; and secondly, Because I will not suppose, that a work intended to exalt his glory, should stand in want of apologies.

Whatever is the proportion of misery in this world, it is certain, that it can be no duty of religion to increase the complaint,——or to affect the praise which the Jesuits college of Granada give of their *Sanchez*,——That, tho' he lived where there was a very sweet garden, yet, was never seen to touch a flower; and that he would rather die, than eat salt or pepper, or aught that might give a relish to his meat.

I pity the men whose natural pleasures are burdens, and who fly from joy, (as these splenetic and morose souls do), as if it was really an evil in itself.

If there is an evil in this world, it is sorrow and heaviness of heart.—The loss of goods,—of health —of coronets and mitres, are only evil, as they occasion sorrow; take that out—the rest is fancy, and dwelleth only in the head of man.

Poor unfortunate creature that he is! as if the causes of anguish in the heart were not enow—but he must fill up the measure with those of caprice; and not only walk in a vain shadow,—but disquiet himself in vain too.

We are a restless set of beings; and as we are likely to continue so to the end of the world,—the best we can do in it, is to make the same use of this part of our character, which wise men do of other bad propensities;——when they find they cannot conquer them,—they endeavor, at least, to divert them into good channels.

If, therefore, we must be a solicitous race of self-tormentors,——let us drop the common objects which make us so,—and for GOD's sake be solicitous only to live well.

SERMON XXIII.

The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazaru considered.

LUKE xvi. 31.

And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses an the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, th one should rise from the dead.

THESE words are the conclusion of the para ble of the rich man and Lazarus; the de sign of which was, to show us the necessity c conducting ourselves, by such lights as GOD ha been pleased to give us: The sense and meanin of the patriarch's final determination in the tex being this, That they who will not be persuade to answer the great purposes of their being, upo such arguments as are offered to them in scrip ture, will never be persuaded to it by any othe means, how extraordinary soever——*If they hea not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be per suaded, tho' one should rise from the dead.*——

——Rise from the dead! To what purpose What could such a messenger propose or urge which had not been proposed and urged already —The novelty or surprise of such a visit might a waken the attention of a curious unthinking peo ple, who spent their time in nothing else, but t hear and tell some new thing; but, ere the won der was well over, some new wonder would star up in its room, and then the man might return t the dead, from whence he came, and not a sou make one inquiry about him.

——This, I fear, would be the conclusion o the affair. But to bring this matter still closer t us, let us imagine, if there is nothing unworthy in it, that GOD, in compliance with a curiou

orld——or, from a better motive——in compas-
on to a sinful one, should vouchsafe to send one
om the dead, to call home our conscience, and
ake us better Christians, better citizens, better
en, and better servants to GOD than we are.

Now bear with me, I beseech you, in framing
ich an address, as I imagine would be the most
ikely to gain our attention, and conciliate the
eart to what he had to say: The great channel
o it is Interest,—and there he would set out.

He might tell us, (after the most indisputable
credentials of whom he served), That he was come
a messenger from the great GOD of Heaven, with
reiterated proposals, whereby much was to be
granted to us on his side,——and something to be
parted with on ours: But that, not to alarm us,
——it was neither houses, nor land, nor posses-
sions;——it was neither wives, or children, or
brethren, or sisters, which we had to forsake;——
no one rational pleasure to be given up;——no
natural endearment to be torn from——

—In a word, he would tell us, We had nothing
o part with——but what was not for our interests
o keep,———and that was our vices; which
rought death and misery to our doors.

He would go on, and prove it by a thousand
rguments, that, to be temperate and chaste, and
ust and peaceable, and charitable and kind to one
nother,—was only doing that for CHRIST's sake,
hich was most for our own: And that, were we
a capacity of capitulating with GOD, upon
hat terms we would submit to his government,
——he would convince us, it would be impossible
or the wit of man, to frame any proposals more
or our present interests, than *to lead an uncorrupt-
d life——to do the thing which is lawful and right*,
nd lay such restraints upon our appetites, as are
or the honor of human nature, and the refine-
ent of human happiness.

When this point was made out, and the alarms from interest got over,——the spectre might address himself to the other passions ;——in doing this he could but give us the most engaging ideas of the perfections of GOD,——nor could he do more, than impress the most awful ones, of his majesty and power :——He might remind us, that we are creatures but of a day, hastening to the place from whence we shall not return ;—— that, during our stay, we stood accountable to this Being, who, tho' rich in mercies,—yet was terrible in his judgments ;——that he took notice of all our actions ;——that he was about our paths, and about our beds, and spied out all our ways ; and was so pure in his nature, that he would punish even the wicked imaginations of the heart, and had appointed a day, wherein he would enter into this inquiry.——

He might add——

—But what ?—with all the eloquence of an inspired tongue, What could he add or say to us, which has not been said before ? The experiment has been tried a thousand times, upon the hopes and fears, the reasons and passions of men by all the powers of nature,———the application of which has been so great, and the variety of addresses so unanswerable, that there is not a greater paradox in the world, than that so good a religion should be no better recommended by its professors.

The fact is, mankind are not always in a humor to be convinced,—and, so long as the prengagement with our passions subsits, it is n argumentation which can do the business ;—w may amuse ourselves with the ceremony of t operation, but we reason not with the proper culty, when we see every thing in the shape a coloring, in which the treachery of the sen paints it ; and, indeed, were we only to look

the world, and observe how inclinable men are to defend evil, as well as to commit it,—one would think, at first sight, they believed that all discourses of religion and virtue were mere matters of speculation, for men to entertain some idle hours with; and conclude very naturally, that we seemed to be agreed in no one thing, but speaking well, and acting ill. But the truest comment is in the text,—*If they hear not Moses and the prophets, &c.*

If they are not brought over to the interests of religion upon such discoveries as God has made, or has enabled them to make, they will stand out against all evidence; in vain shall *one* rise for their conviction:——Was the earth to give up her dead——it would be the same;——every man would return again to his course, and the same bad passions would produce the same bad actions, to the end of the world.

This is the principal lesson of the parable; but I must enlarge upon the whole of it—because it has some other useful lessons, and they will best present themselves to us as we go along.

In this parable, which is one of the most remarkable in the gospel, our Saviour represents a scene, in which, by a kind of contrast, two of the most opposite conditions that could be brought together from human life, are passed before our imagination.

The one, a man exalted above the level of mankind, to the highest pinnacle of prosperity,—to riches—to happiness.—I say, *happiness*,—in compliance with the world, and on a supposition, that the possession of riches must make us happy when the very pursuit of them so warms our imaginations, that we stake both body and soul upon the event, as if they were things not to be purchased at too dear a rate. They are the wages of wisdom, as well as of folly.—Whatever was the case

here, is beyond the purport of the parable ;—the scripture is silent, and so should we ; it marks only his outward condition by the common appendages of it, in the two great articles of Vanity and Appetite :—To gratify the one, he was clothed in purple and fine linen ; to satisfy the other,—fared sumptuously every day,—and upon every thing too—we will suppose, that climates could furnish, that luxury could invent, or the hand of science could torture.

Close by his gates is represented an object whom Providence might seem to have placed there, to cure the pride of man, and show him to what wretchedness his condition might be brought : A creature in all the shipwreck of nature,—helpless —undone—in want of friends, in want of health, —and in want of every thing, with them, which his distress called for.

In this state he described as desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table ; and though the case is not expressly put, that he was refused, yet, as the contrary is not affirmed in the historical part of the parable,—or pleaded after by the other, that he showed mercy to the miserable, we may conclude his request was unsuccessful ;—like too many others in the world, either so high lifted up in it, that they cannot look down distinctly enough upon the sufferings of their fellow-creatures,—or, by long surfeiting in a continual course of banqueting and good cheer, they forget there is such a distemper as hunger in the catalogue of human infirmities.

Overcharged with this, and perhaps a thousand unpitied wants, in a pilgrimage through an inhospitable world, the poor man sinks silently under his burden.—But, good God ! whence is this ? Why dost thou suffer these hardships in a world which thou hast made ? Is it for thy honor, that one man should eat the bread of fullness, and so

many of his own stock and lineage eat the bread of sorrow ?———That this man should go clad in purple, and have all his paths strewed with rose-buds of delight, whilst so many mournful passengers go heavily along, and pass by his gates, hanging down their heads ? Is it for thy glory, O GOD ! that so large a shade of misery should be spread across thy works ?——or, is it that we see but a part of them ? When the great chain at length is let down, and all that has held the two worlds in harmony, is seen ;——when the dawn of that day approaches, in which all the distressful incidents of this drama shall be unravelled ;——when every man's case shall be reconsidered——then wilt thou be fully justified in all thy ways, and every mouth shall be stopped.

After a long day of mercy, mispent in riot and uncharitableness, the rich man *died also*,——the parable adds——and was buried ;——buried, no doubt, in triumph, with all the ill-timed pride of funerals, and empty decorations, which worldly folly is apt to prostitute upon those occasions.

But this was the last vain show,—the utter conclusion of all his epicurean grandeur :—The next is a scene of horror, where he is represented by our SAVIOUR, in a state of the utmost misery, from whence he is supposed to lift up his eyes toward heaven, and cry to the patriarch Abraham for mercy.

And Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things—

—That he had received his good things,——it was from heaven,—and could be no reproach : With what severity soever the scripture speaks against riches, it does not appear, that the living or faring sumptously every day, was the crime objected to the rich man ; or that it is a real part of a vicious character. The case might be then, as now : His quality and station in the world might

be supposed to be such, as not only to have justified his doing this, but, in general, to have required it, without any imputation of doing wrong; for differences of stations there must be in the world, which must be supported by such marks of distinction as custom imposes. The exceeding great plenty and magnificence, in which Solomon is described to have lived, who had ten fat oxen, and twenty oxen out of the pastures, and an hundred sheep, besides harts and roebucks, and fallow deer, and fatted fowl, with thirty measures of fine flour, and threescore measures of meal, for the daily provision of his table;—all this is not laid to him as a sin, but rather remarked as an instance of God's blessing to him:——And, whenever these things are otherwise, it is from a wasteful and dishonest perversion of them to pernicious ends,—and, oft-times, to the very opposite ones for which they were granted—to glad the heart, to open it, and render it more kind.

And this seems to have been the snare the rich man had fallen into;—and, possibly, had he fared less sumptuously,—he might have had more cool hours for reflection, and been better disposed to have conceived an idea of want, and to have felt compassion for it.

And Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things.——Remember!—Sad subject of recollection! that a man has passed thro' this world with all the blessings and advantages of it on his side,—favored by God Almighty with riches,—befriended by his fellow-creatures in the means of acquiring them, assisted, every hour, by the society of which he is a member, in the enjoyment of them;——to remember, how much he has received,——how little he has bestowed,——that he has been no man's friend—no one's protector—no one's benefactor.——Blessed God!

Thus begging in vain for himself, he is represented at last as interceding for his brethren, that Lazarus might be sent to them to give them warning, and save them from the ruin which he had fallen into ;——*They have Moses and the prophets*, was the answer of the patriarch ;—*let them hear them :* But the unhappy man is represented as discontented with it ; and still persisting in his request, and urging—*Nay, father Abraham, but if one went from the dead, they would repent.*

—He thought so—but Abraham knew otherwise : And the grounds of the determination I have explained already,—so shall proceed to draw some other conclusion and lessons from the parable.

And first, our SAVIOUR might farther intend to discover to us, by it, the dangers to which great riches naturally expose mankind, agreeably to what is elsewhere declared, how hardly shall they who have them, enter into the kingdom of heaven.

The truth is, they are often too dangerous a blessing for GOD to trust us with, or we to manage :—They surround us at all times with ease, with nonsense, with flattery, and false friends, with which thousands, and ten thousands, have perished :—They are apt to multiply our faults, and treacherously to conceal them from us ;—they hourly administer to our temptations ;—and allow us neither time to examine our faults, or humility to repent of them ;—nay, what is strange, do they not often tempt men even to covetousness ?—and though, amidst all the ill offices which riches do us, one would last suspect this vice, but rather think the one a cure for the other ; yet, so it is, that many a man contracts his spirits, upon the enlargement of his fortune, and is the more empty for being full.

But there is less need to preach against this :—

We seem all to be hastening to the opposite extreme of luxury and expense :—We generally content ourselves with the solution of it, and say, It is a natural consequence of trade and riches—and there it ends.

By the way, I affirm, there is a mistake in the account; and that it is not riches which are the cause of luxury,—but the corrupt calculation of the world, in making riches the balance for honor, for virtue, and for every thing that is great and good, which goads so many thousands on with an affectation of possessing more than they have,—and, consequently, of engaging in a system of expenses they cannot support.

In one word, it is the necessity of *appearing* to be somebody, in order to be so—which ruins the world.

This leads us to another lesson in the parable, concerning the true use and application of riches; —we may be sure, from the treatment of the rich man, that he did not employ those talents as GOD intended.

How GOD did intend them——may as well be known from an appeal to your own hearts, and the inscription you shall read there,—as from any chapter and verse I might cite upon the subject. Let us then, for a moment, my dear auditors! turn our eyes that way, and consider the traces which even the most insensible man may have proof of, from what he may perceive springing up within him, from some casual act of generosity;—and tho' this is a pleasure which properly belongs to the good, yet, let him try the experiment,—let him comfort the captive, or cover the naked with a garment, and he will feel what is meant by that moral delight arising in the mind from the conscience of a humane action.

But to know it right, we must call upon the compassionate.———Cruelty gives evidence un-

willingly, and feels the pleasure but imperfectly; —for this, like all other pleasures, is of a relative nature, and consequently, the enjoyment of it requires some qualification in the faculty, as much as the enjoyment of any other good does :—— There must be something antecedent in the disposition and temper, which will render that good—good to that individual ;—otherwise though, it is true, it may be possessed,——yet, it never can be enjoyed.

Consider how difficult you would find it, to convince a miserly heart, that any thing is good, which is not profitable ;—or a libertine one, that any thing is bad, which is pleasant.

Preach to a voluptuary, who has modelled both mind and body to no other happiness but good eating and drinking,—bid him *taste and see how good* GOD *is* :—There is not an invitation in all nature would confound him like it.

In a word a man's mind must be like your proposition before it can be relished ;—and it is the resemblance between them, which brings over his judgment, and makes him an evidence on your side.

It is therefore not to the cruel,—It is to the merciful,——to those who rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep,—— that we make this appeal :——It is to the generous, the kind, the humane, that I am now to tell the sad * story of the fatherless,——of him who hath no helper, and bespeak your almsgiving in behalf of those, who know not how to ask for it themselves.

—What can I say more ?——It is a subject on which I cannot inform your judgment,—and, in such an audience, I would not presume to practise upon your passions :—Let it suffice to say, that they whom GOD hath blessed with the means

* *Charity Sermon at St. Andrews, Holborn.*

——and for whom he has done more, in blessing them likewise with a disposition,—have abundant reason to be thankful to him, as the Author of every good gift, for the measure he has bestowed to them both :——It is the refuge against the stormy wind and tempest, which he has planted in our hearts ;—and the constant fluctuation of every thing in this world, forces all the sons and daughters of Adam to seek shelter under it by turns.—Guard it by entails and settlements as we will, the most affluent plenty may be stripped, and find all its worldly comforts, like so many withered leaves, dropping from us :—The crowns of princes may be shaken ;....and the greatest that ever awed the world, have looked back and moralized upon the turn of the wheel.

That which has happened to one,—may happen to every man ;—and therefore, that excellent rule of our SAVIOUR, in acts of benevolence, as well as every thing else, should govern us—*That whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye also unto them.*

Hast thou ever lain upon the bed of languishing, or labored under a distemper which threatened thy life ?——Call to mind thy sorrowful and pensive spirit at that time, and say, What it was that made the thoughts of death so bitter ?——if thou hast children,—I affirm it, the bitterness of death lay there ;—if unbrought up, and unprovided for,—What will become of them ?——Where will they find a friend, when I am gone, who will stand up for them, and plead their cause against the wicked ?

—Blessed GOD ! to thee, who art a father to the fatherless, and a husband to the widow, I entrust them.

Hast thou ever sustained any considerable shock in thy fortune ? or, has the scantiness of thy condition hurried thee into great straits, and brought

ıee almost to distraction ?—Consider who was it ıat spread a table in that wilderness of thought, —who made thy cup to overflow ?—Was it not a friend of consolation who stepped in,—saw thee embarrassed with the tender pledges of thy love, and the partner of thy cares,—took them under his protection——Heaven ! thou wilt reward him for it !——and freed thee from all the terrifying apprehensions of a parent's love ?

Hast thou————

—But, how shall I ask a question which must bring tears into so many eyes ?—Hast thou ever been wounded, in a more affecting manner still, by the loss of a most obliging friend,—or been torn away from the embraces of a dear and promising child, by the stroke of death !—Bitter remembrance !—nature droops at it—but nature is the same in all conditions and lots of life. A child thrust forth in an evil hour, without food, without raiment, bereft of instruction, and the means of its salvation, is a subject of more tender heart-aches, and will awaken every power of nature :—As we have felt ourselves,—let us feel —for CHRIST's sake—let us feel for theirs :—— And may the GOD of all comfort bless you. *Amen.*

SERMON XXIV.

Pride.

LUKE XIV. 10, 11.

But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room, that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say to thee, Friend go up higher; then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them who sit at meat with thee:—For whosoever exalted himself, shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted.

IT is an exhortation of our SAVIOUR's to humility, addressed by way of inference from what he had said in the three foregoing verses of the chapter; where upon entering into the house of one of the chief Pharisees, to eat bread, and marking how small a portion of this necessary virtue entered in with the several guests, discovering itself from their choosing the chief rooms and most distinguished places of honor,.....he takes the occasion which such a behavior offered, to caution them against pride;....states the inconvenience of the passion;....shows the disappointments which attend it,....the disgrace in which it generally ends, in being forced, at last, to recede from the pretensions to what is more than our due; .....which, by the way, is the very thing the passion is eternally prompting us to expect. When, therefore, thou art bidden to a wedding, says our SAVIOUR, sit not down in the highest room, lest a more honorable man than thou, be bidden of him; and he that bade thee and him, come and say to thee.....Give this man place:....And thou begin with shame, to take the loowest room.

.....But thou, when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room. Hard lecture!....In the lowest room?.....What!.....Do I owe nothing to myself? Must I forget my station, my character in life?....Resign the precedence which my birth,

my fortune, my talents, have already placed me in possession of ?....Give all up ! and suffer inferiors to take my honor ?....Yes ;....for that, says our SAVIOUR, is the road to it :.....*For when he that bade thee cometh, he will say to thee, Friend, go up higher ; then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them who sit at meet with thee ;....for whosoever exalteth himself, shall be abased ; and he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted.*

To make good the truth of which declaration, it is not necessary we should look beyond this life, and say, That, in the day of retribution, wherein every high thing shall be brought low, and every irregular passion dealt with as it deserves ;....that pride, amongst the rest, (considered as a vicious character), shall meet with its proper punishment, of being abased, and lying down forever in shame and dishonor.....It is not necessary we should look so far forwards, for the accomplishment of this :—The words seem not so much to imply the thread of a distant punishment, the execution of which was to be respited to that day,—as the declaration of a plain truth, depending upon the natural course of things,—and evidently verified in every hour's commerce of the world ; from whence as well as from our reasoning upon the point, it is found, That pride lays us open to so many mortifying encounters, which humility in its own nature rests secure from.....that verily ; each of them, in this world, have their reward faithfully dealt out by the natural workings of mens passions, which, tho' very bad executioners in general, yet are so far just ones in this, that they seldom suffer the exultations of an insolent temper to escape the abasement, or the deportment of an humble one to fail of the honor, which each of their characters do deserve.

In other vicious excesses which a man commits, the world (tho' it is not much to its credit) seems

to stand pretty neuter: If you are extravagant or intemperate, you are looked upon as the greatest enemy to yourself;.....or, if an enemy to the public,.....at least, you are so remote a one to each individual, that no one feels himself immediately concerned in your punishment: But in the instances of pride, the attack is personal; for as this passion can only take its rise from a secret comparison, which the party has been making of himself to my disadvantage, every intimation he gives me of what he thinks of the matter, is so far a direct injury, either as it withholds the respect which is my due,.....or perhaps denies me to have any; or else, which presses equally hard, as it puts me in mind of the defects which I really have, and of which I am truly conscious, and consequently think myself the less deserving of an admonition: In every one of which cases, the proud man, in whatever language he speaks it, ...if it is expressive of this superiority over me, either in the gifts of fortune, the advantages of birth or improvements, as it has proceeded from a mean estimation, and possibly a very unfair one of the like pretensions in myself,....the attack, I say, is personal; and has generally the fate to be felt and resented as such.

So that with regard to the present inconveniencies, there is scarce any vice, bating such as are immediately punished by laws, which a man may not indulge with more safety to himself, than this one of pride;....the humblest of men not being so entirely void of the passion themselves, but that they suffer so much from the overflowings of it in others, as to make the literal accomplishment of the text, a common interest and concern; in which they are generally successful,—the nature of the vice being such, as not only to tempt you to it, but to afford the occasions itself of its own humiliation.

The proud man.....see!....he is sore all over:

Touch him.....you put him in pain : And tho' of all others, he acts as if every mortal was void of all sense and feeling, yet is possessed with so nice and exquisite a one himself, that the slights, the little neglects and instances of disesteem, which would be scarce felt by another man, are perpetually wounding him, and oft-times piercing him to his very heart.

I would not therefore be a proud man, was it only for this, that it should not be in the power of every one who thought fit....to chastise me ;.... my other infirmities, however unworthy of me, at least will not incommode me ;....so little discountenance do I see given to them, that it is not the world's fault, if I suffer by them :.....But here .....if I exalt myself, I have no prospect of escaping ;.....with this vice I stand swoln up in every body's way, and must unavoidably be thrust back; whichever way I turn, whatever step I take under the direction of this passion, I press unkindly upon some one, and, in return, must prepare myself for such mortifying repulses, as will bring me down, and make me go on my way sorrowing.

This is from the nature of things, and the experience of life as far back as Solomon, whose observation upon it was the same,.....and it will ever hold good,—*that before honor was humility, and a haughty spirit before a fall.—Put not therefore thyself forth in the presence of the king, and stand not in the place of great men :—For better is it*——(which by the way is the very dissuasive in the text)—— *better is it, that it be said unto thee, Friend, come up higher, than that thou shouldest be put lower in the presence of the prince whom thine eyes have seen.*

Thus much for the illustration of this one argument of our Saviour's against pride :.....There are many other considerations which expose the weakness of it, which his knowledge of the heart of man might have suggested; but as the particular

occasion which gave rise to this lecture of our SAVIOUR's against pride, naturally led him to speak of the mortifications which attend such instances of it as he then beheld;.....for this reason, the other arguments might be omitted, which, perhaps, in a set discourse, would be doing injustice to the subject. I shall therefore, in the remaining part of this, beg leave to offer some other considerations, of a moral as well as a religious nature, upon this subject, as so many inducements to check this weak passion in man; which, tho' one of the most inconvenient of his infirmities,—the most painful and discourteous to society, yet, by a sad fatality, so it is, that there are few vices, except such whose temptations are immediately seated in our natures, to which there is so general a propensity throughout the whole race.

This had led some satirical pens to write, That all mankind, at the bottom, were proud alike;——that one man differed from another, not so much in the different portions which he possessed of it, as in the different art and address by which he excels in the management and disguise of it to the world. We trample, no doubt, too often, upon the pride of Plato's mantle, with as great a pride of our own; yet on the whole, the remark has more spleen than truth in it; there being thousands, (if any evidence is to be allowed), of the most unaffected humility, and truest poverty of spirit, which actions can give proof of. Notwithstanding this, so much may be allowed to the observation, That pride is a vice which grows up in society so insensibly,.....steals in, unobserved, upon the heart,upon so many occasions,...forms itself upon such strange pretensions, and, when it has done, veils itself under such a variety of unsuspected appearances,——sometimes even under that of humility itself;——in all which cases, self-love, like a false friend, instead of check-

ing, most treacherously feeds this humor,——points out some excellence in every soul to make him vain, and think more highly of himself, than he ought to think ;——that upon the whole, there is no one weakness into which the heart of man is more easily betrayed,——or which requires greater helps of good sense, and good principles, to guard against.

And first, the root from which it springs, is no inconsiderable descredit to the fruit.

If you look into the best moral writers, who have taken pains to search into the grounds of this passion,—they will tell you, That pride is the vice of little and contracted souls :—That whatever affectation of greatness it generally wears and carries in the looks, there is always meanness in the heart of it : A haughty and an abject temper, I believe, are much nearer a-kin than they will acknowledge ;——like *poor* relations, they look a little shy at one another at first sight ; but, trace back their pedigree——they are but collateral branches from the same stem ; and there is scarce any one who has not seen many instances of it, as one of our poets alludes to, in that admirable stroke he has given of this affinity, in his description of a *Pride which licks the dust.*

As it has *meanness* at the bottom of it,—so it is justly charged with having *weakness* there too ; of which, it gives the strongest proof, in regard to the chief end it has in view, and the absurd means it takes to bring it about.

Consider a moment :—What is it the proud man aims at ?——Why,——such a measure of respect and deference as is due to his superior merit, *&c. &c.*

Now, good sense, and a knowledge of the world, show us, that how much soever of these are due to a man, allowing he has made a right calculation—they are still dues of such a nature, that

they are not to be insisted upon. Honor and respect must be a *free-will offering:* Treat them otherwise, and claim them from the world as a tax,—they are sure to be withheld; the first discovery of such an expectation disappoints it, and prejudices your title to it for ever.

To this speculative argument of its weakness, it has generally the ill fate to add another, of a more substantial nature, which is matter of fact; that to turn giddy upon every little exaltation, is experienced to be no less a mark of a *weak brain* in the figurative, than it is in the literal sense of the expression.—In sober truth, it is but a scurvy kind of a trick, *(quoties voluit Fortuna jocari)*—when Fortune, in one of her merry moods, takes a poor devil, with this passion in his head, and mounts him up, all at once, as high as she can get him,—for it is sure to make him play such phantastic tricks, as to become the very fool of the comedy; and, was he not a general benefactor to the world in making it merry, I know not how spleen could be pacified during the representation.

A third argument against pride, is the natural connection it has with vices of an unsocial aspect: The scripture seldom introduces it alone—anger or strife, or revenge, or some inimical passion, is ever upon the stage with it; the proofs and reasons of which I have not time to enlarge on, and therefore shall say no more upon this argument, than this,—That, was there no other—yet the bad company this vice is generally found in, would be sufficient, by itself, to engage a man to avoid it.

Thus much for the moral considerations upon this subject; a great part of which, as they illustrate chiefly the inconveniencies of pride in a social light, may seem to have a greater tendency to make men guard the appearances of it, than conquer the passion itself, and root it out of their nature. To do this effectually, we must add the

arguments of religion, without which, the best moral discourse may prove little better than a cold political lecture, taught merely to govern the passion, so as not to be injurious to man's present interest or quiet; all which, a man may learn to practise well enough, and yet, at the same time, be a perfect stranger to the best part of humility, which implies, not a concealment of pride, but an absolute conquest over the first risings of it which are felt in the heart of man.

And first, one of the most persuasive arguments which religion offers to this end, is that which arises from the state and condition of ourselves, both as to our natural and moral imperfections. It is impossible to reflect a moment upon this hint, but with a heart full of the humble exclamation, *O God! what is man!—even a thing of nought*—a poor, infirm miserable, short-lived creature, that passes away like a shadow, and is hastening off the stage, where the theatrical titles and distinctions, and the whole mask of pride which he has worn for a day, will fall off, and leave him naked, as a neglected slave. Send forth your imagination, I beseech you, to view the last scene of the greatest and proudest who ever awed and governed the world—See the empty vapor disappearing! one of the arrows of mortality this moment sticks fast within him:—See!—it forces out his life, and freezes his blood and spirits.—Approach his bed of state——lift up the curtain ——regard a moment with silence——

——Are these cold hands and pale lips, all that is left of him, who was canonized by his own pride, or made a god of, by his own flatterers?

O my soul! with what dreams hast thou been bewitched? how hast thou been deluded by the objects thou hast so eagerly grasped at?

If this reflection from the natural imperfection of man, which he cannot remedy, does neverthe-

less strike a damp upon human pride; much more must the considerations do so, which arise from the wilful depravations of his nature.

Survey yourselves, my dear Christians, a few moments in this light—behold a disobedient, ungrateful, intractable and disorderly set of creatures, going wrong seven times in a day,—acting sometimes every hour of it against your own convictions—your own interests, and the intentions of your God, who wills and proposes nothing but your happiness and prosperity—What reason does this view furnish you for pride? how many does it suggest, to mortify and make you ashamed?—Well might the son of Syrach say, in that sarcastical remark of his upon it, *That* PRIDE *was not made for man*;—for some purposes, and for some particular beings, the passion might have been shaped—but not for him;—fancy it where you will, it is no where so improper,—it is in no creature so unbecoming.—

—But why so cold an assent, to so uncontested a truth!—Perhaps thou hast reasons to be proud: —For heaven's sake let us hear them.—Thou hast the advantages of birth and title to boast of—or thou standest in the sunshine of court favor—or thou hast a large fortune—or great talents—or much learning—or nature has bestowed her graces upon thy person:——Speak—on which of these foundations hast thou raised this fanciful structure?——Let us examine them.

Thou art well born;—then trust me, it will pollute no one drop of thy blood to be humble: Humility calls no man down from his rank,—divests not princes of their titles; it is in life, what the *clear obscure* is in painting,—it makes the hero step forth in the canvas, and detaches his figure from the group, in which he would otherwise stand confounded for ever.

If thou art rich—then show the greatness of

thy fortune,—or, what is better, the greatness of thy soul in the meekness of thy conversation; condescend to men of low estate,——support the distressed, and patronize the neglected.———Be great; but let it be in considering riches as they are,—as *talents committed to an earthen vessel*;—that thou art but the *receiver*;—and that, to be obliged, and be vain too—is but the old solecism of pride and beggary, which, tho' they often meet—yet ever make but an absurd society.

If thou art powerful in interest, and standest deified by a servile tribe of dependants,—why shouldest thou be proud———because they are hungry?——Scourge me such sycophants; they have turned the heads of thousands as well as thine.———

—But it is thy own dexterity and strength which have gained thee this eminence:—Allow it; but art thou proud, that thou standest in a place where thou art the mark of one man's envy, another man's malice, or a third man's revenge,——where good men may be ready to suspect thee, and whence bad men will be ready to pull thee down? I would be proud of nothing that is uncertain. Haman was so, because he was admitted alone to queen Esther's banquet; and the distinction raised him,—but it was fifty cubits higher than he ever dreamed or thought of.

Let us pass on to the pretences of learning, &c. &c. If thou hast a little, thou wilt be proud of it in course: If thou hast much, and good sense along with it, there will be no reason to dispute against the passion: A beggarly parade of remnants is but a sorry object of pride at the best;——but more so, when we can cry out upon it, as the poor man did of his hatchet,—**Alas, Master,———for it was borrowed.*

* 2 Kings vi. 7.

It is treason to say the same of beauty,—whatever we do of the arts and ornaments with which pride is wont to set it off: The weakest minds are most caught with both; being ever glad to win attention and credit from small and slender accidents, through disability of purchasing them by better means. In truth, beauty has so many charms, one knows not how to speak against it; and when it hapens, that a graceful figure is the habitation of a virtuous soul,—when the beauty of the face speaks out the modesty and humility of the mind, and the justness of the proportion raises our thoughts up to the art and wisdom of the great Creator,—something may be allowed it,—and something to the embellishments which set it off;——and yet, when the whole apology is read,—it will be found at least, that beauty, like truth, never is so glorious as when it goes the plainest.

Simplicity is the great friend to nature; and if I would be proud of any thing in this silly world, it should be of this honest alliance.

Consider what has been said; and may the God of all mercies and kindness watch over your passions, and inspire you *with all humbleness of mind, meekness, patience, and long-suffering*. Amen.

SERMON XXV.

Humility.

MATT. XI. 29.

Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

THE great business of man, is, the regulation of his spirits;—the possession of such a frame and temper of mind, as will lead us peaceably thro' this world, and, in the many weary stages of it, afford us, what we shall be sure to stand in need of,—*rest unto our souls.*——

—Rest unto our souls!—it is all we want—the end of all our wishes and pursuits; give us a prospect of this, we take the wings of the morning, and fly to the uttermost parts of the earth, to have it in possession: We seek for it in titles, in riches and pleasures,—climb up after it by ambition,—come down again, and stoop for it by avarice,—try all extremes; still we are gone out of the way, nor is it till after many miserable experiments, that we are convinced at last, we have been seeking every where for it, but where there was a prospect of finding it; and that is, within ourselves, in a meek and lowly disposition of heart. This, and this only, will give us rest unto our souls:—Rest from those turbulent and haughty passions which disturb our quiet:—Rest from the provocations and disappointments of the world, and a train of untold evils too long to be recounted,—against all which, this frame and preparation of mind is the best protection.

I beg you will go along with me in this argument. Consider how great a share of the uneasiness which take up and torment our thoughts, owe their rise to nothing else, but the dispositions of mind which are opposite to this character.

With regard to the provocation and offences which are unavoidably happening to a man in his commerce with the world,—take it as a rule—As a man's pride is,...so is always his displeasure;—as the opinion of himself rises,—so does the injury,—so does his resentment: It is this which gives edge and force to the instrument which has struck him,—and excites that heat in the wound, which renders it incurable.

See how different the case is with the humble man: One half of these painful conflicts he actually escapes; the other part falls lightly on him:—He provokes no man by contempt; thrusts himself forward as the mark of no man's envy; so that he cuts off the first fretful occasions of the greatest part of these evils; and for those in which the passions of others would involve him, like the humble shrub in the valley, gently gives way, and scarce feels the injury of those stormy encounters which rend the proud cedar, and tear it up by its roots.

If you consider it, with regard to the many disappointments of this life, which arise from the hopes of bettering our condition, and advancing in the world, the reasoning is the same.

What we expect....is ever in proportion to the estimate made of ourselves. When pride and self-love have brought us in their account of this matter,....we find, that we are worthy of all honors, fit for all places and employments: As our expectations rise and multiply, so must our disappointments with them; and there needs nothing more, to lay the foundation of our unhappiness, and both to make and keep us miserable. And in truth, there is nothing so common in life, as to see thousands, who, you would say, had all the reason in the world to be at rest, so torn up and disquieted with sorrows of this class, and so incessantly tortured with the disappointments which their pride and pas-

sions have created for them, that tho' they appear to have all the ingredients of happiness in their hands, they can neither compound or use them : ....How should they ? the goad is ever in their sides, and so hurries them on from one expectation to another, as to leave them no rest day or night.

Humility, therefore, recommends itself as a security against these heart-aches, which, tho' ridiculous sometimes in the eye of the beholder, yet are serious enough to the man who suffers them, ...and, I believe, would make no inconsiderable account in a true catalogue of the disquietudes of mortal man : Against these, I say, humility is the best defence.

He that is little in his own eyes, is little too in his desires, and consequently moderate in his pursuit of them : Like another man, he may fail in his attempts, and lose the point he aimed at,.... but that is all ;.....he loses not himself,—he loses not his happiness and peace of mind with it :— Even the contentions of the humble man are mild and placid. Blessed character !.....when such a one is thrust back, who does not pity him ?—when he falls, who would not stretch out a hand to raise him up ?

And here, I cannot help stopping in the midst of this argument, to make a short observation, which is this....When we reflect upon the character of humility, we are apt to think it stands the most naked and defenceless of all virtues whatever, the least able to support its claims against the insolent antagonist who seems ready to bear him down, and all opposition which such a temper can make.

Now, if we consider him as standing alone,.... no doubt, in such a case he will be overpowered and trampled upon by his opposer ; but if we consider the meek and lowly man as he is..... fenced and guarded by the love, the friendship,

and wishes of all mankind,....that the other stands alone, hated, discountenanced, without one true friend or hearty well-wisher on his side ;....when this is balanced, we shall have reason to change our opinion, and be convinced, that the humble man, strengthened with such an alliance, is far from being so over-matched, as at first sight he may appear ; nay, I believe, one might venture to go farther, and engage for it, that in all such cases, where real fortitude and true personal courage were wanted, he is much more likely to give proof of it, and I would sooner look for it in such a temper, than in that of his adversary. Pride may make a man violent, but humility will make him firm : And which of the two, do you think, likely to come off with honor ?—he who acts from the changeable impulse of heated blood, and follows the uncertain motions of his pride and fury, or the man who stands cool and collected in himself,—who governs his resentments, instead of being governed by them, and, on every occasion acts upon the steady motives of principle and duty?

But this by the way ;—though, in truth, it falls in with the main argument ; For, if the observation is just, and humility has the advantages where we should least expect them, the argument rises higher in behalf of those which are more apparently on its side. In all which, if the humble man finds, what the proud man must never hope for in this world,—that is, *rest to his soul*—so does he likewise meet with it from the influence such a temper has upon his condition, under the evils of his life, not as chargeable upon the vices of men, but as the portion of his inheritance by the appointment of God. For if, as Job says, we are born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards,—surely it is he who thinks the greatest of these troubles below his sins, and the smallest favors above his merits, that is likely to suffer

ıe least from the one, and enjoy the most from he other: It is he who possesses his soul in meek- ıess, and keeps it subjected to all the issues of ɔrtune, that is the farthest out of their reach. Jo——He blames not the sun, tho' it does not ipen his vine, nor blusters at the winds, tho' they ring him no profit. If the fountain of the hum- le man rises not so high as he could wish, he ıinks, however, that it rises as high as it ought, nd, as the laws of nature still do their duty, that e has no cause to complain against them.

If disappointed of riches, he knows the provi- ence of God is not his debtor; that tho' he has eceived less than others, yet, as he thinks himself ɔss than the least, he has reason to be thankful.

If the world goes untoward with the humble ıan, in other respects, he knows a truth which ıe proud man does never acknowledge, and that ɔ, that the world was not made for him; and herefore, how little share soever he has of its dvantages, he sees an argument of content, in eflecting how little it is, that a compound of sin, f ignorance, and frailty, has grounds to expect.

A soul thus turned and resigned, is carried moothly down the stream of providence;—no ɔmptations in his passage disquiet him with de- ire,—no dangers alarm him with fear: Though pen to all the changes and chances of others, yet y seeing the justice of what happens, and hum- ly giving way to the blow, though he is smitten, e is not smitten like other men, or feels the mart which they do.

Thus much for the doctrine of humility; let s now look towards the example of it.

It is observed by some one, that as pride was ıe passion through which sin and misery enter- d into the world, and gave our enemy the triumph f ruining our nature, that therefore the Son of od, who came to seek and to save that which

was lost, when he entered upon the work of our restoration, he began at the very point where he knew we had failed; and this he did, by endeavoring to bring the soul of man back to its original temper of humility; so that his first public address from the Mount, began with a declaration of blessedness to the poor in spirit, and almost his last exhortation in the text, was to copy the fair original he had set them of this virtue, and *to learn of him to be meek and lowly in heart.*

It is the most unanswerable appeal that can be made to the heart of man, and so persuasive, and accommodated to all Christians, that, as much pride as there is still in the world, it is not credible but that every believer must receive some tincture of this character, or bias towards it, from the example of so great, and yet so humble a master, whose whole course of life was a particular lecture to this one virtue; and, in every instance of it, showed, that he came, not to share the pride and glories of life, or swell the hopes of ambitious followers, but to cast a damp upon them for ever, by appearing himself rather as a servant than a master, coming, as he continually declared, not to be ministered unto, but to minister; and, as the prophet had foretold in that mournful description of him, to have no form or comliness, nor any beauty that they should desire him.—— The voluntary meanness of his birth,————the poverty of his life,——the low offices in which it was engaged, in preaching the gospel to the poor——the inconveniences which attended the execution of it, in having no where to lay his head, ——all spoke the same language, That the GOD of truth should submit to the suspicion of an imposture:—His humble deportment under that, and a thousand provocations of a thankless people, still raises his character higher; and, what exalts it to its highest pitch is the tender and pathetic

proof he gave of the same disposition, at the conclusion and great catastrophe of his suffering, when a life full of so many instances of humility, was crowned with the most endearing one, of *humbling himself even to the death of the cross;* the death of a slave, a malefactor, dragged to *Calvary* without opposition, insulted without complaint.

Blessed JESUS!—How can the man who calls upon thy name, but learn of thee to be meek and lowly in heart? How can he but profit, when such a lesson was seconded by such an example?

If humility shines so bright in the character of CHRIST, so does it in that of his religion;——the true spirit of which, tends all the same way.—Christianity, when rightly explained and practised, is all meekness and candor, and love and courtesy;—and there is no one passion our SAVIOUR rebukes so often, or with so much sharpness, as that one, which is subversive of these kind effects, and that is pride, which, is in proportion as it govern us, necessarily leads us on to a discourteous opinion and treatment of others.—I say, *necessarily*——because it is a natural consequence, and the progress from the one to the other is unavoidable.

This our *SAVIOUR* often remarks, in the character of the Pharisees:—They trusted in themselves,—it was no wonder, then, they despised others.

This, I believe, might principally relate to spiritual pride, which, by the way, is the worst of all pride;—and, as it is a very bad species of a very bad passion, I cannot do better than conclude the discourse with some remarks upon it.

In most conceits of a religious superiority, there has usually gone, hand in hand with it, another fancy, which, I suppose, has fed it—and that is, a persuasion of some more than ordinary aids and illuminations from above.—Let us examine *this matter.*

That the influence and assistance of GOD's spirit, in a way imperceptible to us, do enable us to render him an acceptable service, we learn from scripture :—In what particular manner this is effected, so that the act should still be imputed ours —the scripture says not: We know only the account is so: But, as for any sensible demonstrations of its workings, to be felt as such within us —the word of GOD is utterly silent; nor can that silence be supplied by any experience. We have none; unless you call the false pretences to it such—suggested by an enthusiastic or destempered fancy. As expressly as we are told, and pray for the inspiration of GOD's Spirit, there are no boundaries fixed, nor can any be ever marked, to distinguish them from the efforts and diterminations of our own reason: And as firmly as most Christians believe the effects of them upon their hearts, I may even venture to affirm, that since the promises were made, there never was a Christian, of a cool head, and sound judgment, that, in any instance of a change of life, would presume to say, which part of his reformation was owing to divine help, or which to the operations of his own mind; or who, upon looking back, would pretend to strike the line, and say, "Here it was "that my own reflections ended," and at this point the suggestions of the Spirit of GOD began to take place.

However backwards the world has been in former ages, in the discovery of such points as GOD never meant us to know, we have been more successful in our own days: Thousands can trace out, now, the impressions of this divine intercourse in themselves, from the first moment they received it, and with such distinct intelligence of its progress and workings, as to require no evidence of its truth.

It must be owned, that the present age has not

altogether the honor of this discovery; there were too many grounds given to improve on, in the religious cant of the last century; when the *in-comings*, *in-dwellings*, and *out-lettings* of the Spirit, were the subjects of so much edification; and when, as they do now, the most illiterate mechanics, who, as a witty divine said of them, were much fitter to *make* a pulpit, than get into one, were yet able so to frame their nonsense to the nonsense of the times, as to beget an opinion in their followers, not only that they prayed and preached by inspiration, but that the most common actions of their lives were set about in the Spirit of the Lord.

The tenets of the Quakers (a harmless quiet people) are collateral descendants from the same enthusiastic original; and their accounts and way of reasoning upon their inward light and spiritual worship, are much the same; which last they carry thus much farther, as to believe the holy Ghost comes down upon their assemblies, and *moves* them, without regard to condition or sex, to make intercessions with unutterable groans.

So that, in fact, the opinions of Methodists, upon which I was first entering, is but a republication, with some alterations, of the same extravagant conceits; and as enthusiasm generally speaks the same language in all ages, it is but too sadly verified in this: For tho' we have not yet got to the old terms of the in-comings and in-dwellings of the spirit, yet we have arrived to the first feelings of its entrance, recorded with as particular an exactness, as an act of filiation,—so that numbers will tell you the identical place, the day of the month, and the hour of the night, when the Spirit came in upon them, and took possession of their hearts.

Now, there is this inconvenience on our side, that there is no arguing with a frenzy of this kind: For unless a representation of the case be

a confutation of its folly to them, they must for ever be led captive by a delusion, from which no reasoner can redeem them: For if you should inquire, upon what evidence so strange a persuasion is grounded? they will tell you, "They feel it is so." If you reply, That this is no conviction to you, who do not feel it like them, and therefore, would wish to be satisfied by what tokens they are able to distinguish such emotions, from those of fancy and complexion? they will answer, That the manner of it is incommunicable by human language; but it is a matter of fact; they feel its operations as plain and distinct, as the natural sensations of pleasure, or the pains of a disordered body. And since I have mentioned a disordered body, I cannot help suggesting, that, amongst the more serious and deluded of this sect, it is much to be doubted, whether a disordered body has not oft-times as great a share in letting in these conceits, as a disordered mind.

When a poor disconsolated drooping creature is terrified from all enjoyment,——prays without ceasing, till his imagination is heated,—fasts, and mortifies, and mopes, till his body is in as bad a plight as his mind; is it a wonder, that the mechanical disturbances and conflicts of an empty belly, interpreted by an empty head, should be mistook for workings of a different kind from what they are? or that, in such a situation, where the mind sits upon the watch for extraordinary occurrences, and the imagination is pre-engaged on its side, is it strange if every commotion should help to fix him in this malady, and make him a fitter subject for the treatment of a physician than a Divine?

In many cases, they seem so much above the skill of either, that unless God in his mercy rebuke this lying spirit, and call it back,—it may go on, and persuade millions to their destruction.

SERMON XXVI.

Advantages of Christianity to the World.

ROMANS i. 22.

Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.

THERE is no one project to which the whole race of mankind is so universally a bubble, as to that of being thought wise; and the affectation of it is so visible, in men of all complexions, that you every day see some one or other so very solicitous to establish the character, as not to allow himself leisure to do the things which fairly win it; expending more art and stratagem to appear so in the eyes of the world, than what would suffice to make him so in truth.

It is owing to the force of this desire, that you see, in general, there is no injury touches a man so sensibly, as an insult upon his parts and capacity. Tell a man of other defects,—that he wants learning, industry, or application,—he will hear your reproof with patience.—Nay, you may go farther: Take him in a proper season, you may tax his morals; you may tell him he is irregular in his conduct, passionate or revengeful in his nature, loose in his principles: Deliver it with the gentleness of a friend, possibly he will not only bear with you, but, if ingenuous, he will thank you for your lecture, and promise a reformation; but hint—hint but at a defect in his intellectuals,—touch but that sore place,—from that moment you are looked upon as an enemy sent to torment him before his time, and, in return, may reckon upon his resentment and ill will for ever; so that, in general, you will find it safer to tell a man that he is a knave, than a fool; and stand a better chance of being forgiven, for proving he has been wanting in a point of common honesty, than in a point of common sense.

Strange souls that we are!—as if, to live well, was not the greatest argument of wisdom;—and, as if what reflected upon our morals, did not most of all reflect upon our understandings!

This, however, is a reflection we make a shift to overlook in the heat of this pursuit; and tho' we all covet this great character of wisdom, there is scarce any point wherein we betray more folly than in our judgments concerning it; rarely bringing this precious ore either to the test or the balance; and tho' it is of the last consequence not to be deceived in it, we generally take it upon trust; seldom suspect the quality, but never the quantity of what has fallen to our lot. So that, however inconsistent a man shall be in his opinions of this, and what absurd measures soever he takes in consequence of it, in the conduct of his life, he still speaks comfort to his soul; and, like Solomon, when he had least pretence for it, in the midst of his nonsense, will cry out and say, *That all my wisdom remaineth with me.*

Where then, is wisdom to be found? and where is the place of understanding?

The politicians of this world, *professing themselves* wise admit of no other claims of wisdom, but the knowledge of men and business; the understanding the interests of states; the intrigues of courts; the finding out the passions and weaknesses of foreign ministers; and turning them, and all events, to their country's glory and advantage.

Not so the little man of the world, who thinks the main point of wisdom is, to take care of himself; to be wise in his generation; to make use of the opportunity, whilst he has it, of raising a fortune, and heraldizing a name. Far wide is the speculative and studious man (whose office is in the clouds) from such little ideas:—Wisdom dwells, with him, in finding out the secrets of nature; sounding the depths of arts and sciences;

measuring the heavens; telling the number of the stars, and calling them all by their names:—So that, when, in our busy imaginations, we have built and unbuilt again *God's stories in the heavens*, and fancy we have found out the point whereon to fix the foundations of the earth, and, in the language of the book of Job, have searched out the corner-stone thereof,—we think our titles to wisdom built upon the same basis with those of our knowledge, and that they will continue for ever.

The mistake of these pretenders is shown at large by the apostle, in the chapter from which the text is taken—*Professing themselves* WISE,—in which expression (by the way) St. Paul is thought to allude to the vanity of the Greeks and Romans, who, being great encouragers of arts and learning, which they had carried to extraordinary heights, considered all other nations as *Barbarians*, in respect of themselves; and amongst whom, particularly the Greeks, the men of study and inquiry, had assumed to themselves, with great indecorum, the title of the Wise Men.

With what parade and ostentation soever this was made out, it had the fate to be attended with one of the most mortifying abasements which could happen to wisdom; and that was, an ignorance of those points which most concerned man to know.

This he shows from the general state of the Gentile world, in the great article of their misconceptions of the Deity; and, as wrong notions produce wrong actions,—of the duties and services they owed to him, and, in course, of what they owed to one another.

For, tho' as he argues in the foregoing verses, *The invisible things of him from the creation of the world, might be clearly seen and understood, by the things that are made*; that is, tho' GOD, by the clearest discovery of himself, had ever laid before

mankind such evident proofs of his eternal Being, —his infinite powers and perfections, so that, what is to be known of his invisible nature, might all along be traced by the marks of his goodness, and the visible frame and order of the world: Yet, so utterly were they without excuse, that, tho' they knew GOD, and saw his image and superscription in every part of his works, *yet they glorified him not.* So bad a use did they make of the powers given them from this great discovery, that, instead of adoring the Being thus manifested to them, in purity and truth, they fell into the most gross and absurd delusions; *changed the glory of the incorruptible God, into an image made like unto corruptible men, to birds, to four-footed beasts and creeping things:— Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.* All their specious wisdom was but a more glittering kind of ignorance, and ended in the most dishonorable of all mistakes, in setting up fictitious gods, to receive the tribute of their adoration and thanks.

The fountain of religion being thus poisoned, no wonder the stream showed its effects, which are charged upon them in the following words, where he describes the heathen world *as full of unrighteousness*, fornication, covetousness, maliciousness, full of murder, envy, debate, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, haters of GOD, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful!———GOD in heaven defend us from such a catalogue!

But these disorders, if fairly considered, you will say, have, in no age, arisen so much from want of light, as a want of disposition to follow the light which GOD has ever imparted: That the law written in their hearts, was clear and express enough for any reasonable creatures, and would have directed them, had they not suffered their

passions more forcibly to direct them otherwise: That if we are to judge from this effect, namely, the corruption of the world, the same prejudice will recur even against the Christian religion; since mankind have at least been as wicked in latter days, as in the more remote and simple ages of the world: And that, if we may trust to facts, there are no vices which the apostle fixes upon the heathen world, before the preaching of the gospel, which may not be paralleled by as black a catalogue of vices in the Christian world since.

This necessarily brings us to an inquiry, Whether Christianity has done the world any service? and, How far the morals of it have been made better since the system has been embraced?

In litigating this, one might oppose facts to facts, to the end of the world, without coming one jot nearer the point. Let us see how far their mistakes concerning the Deity, will throw light upon the subject.

That there was one supreme Being, who made this world, and who ought to be worshipped by his creatures, is the foundation of all religion, and so obvious a truth in nature, that reason, as the apostle acknowledges, was always able to discover it: And yet it seems strange, that the same faculty which made the discovery, should be so little able to keep true to its own judgment, and support it long against the prejudices of wrong heads, and the propensity of weak ones towards idolatry and a multiplicity of gods.

For want of something to have gone hand in hand with reason, and fixed the persuasion for ever upon their minds, that there was in truth but one God, the maker and supporter of heaven and earth,—infinite in wisdom and knowledge, and all perfections;—how soon was this simple idea lost, and mankind led to dispose of those attributes inherent in the Godhead, and divide and sub-

divide them again amongst deities, which their own dreams had given substance to ;——his eternal power and dominion parcelled out to gods of the land, to gods of the sea, to gods of the infernal regions ; whilst the great God of gods, and Lord of lords, who ruleth over all the kingdoms of the world, who is so great, that nought is able to control or withstand his power, was supposed to rest contented with his allotment, and to want power to act within such parts of his empire, as they dismembered and assigned to others.

If the number of their gods, and this partition of their power, would lessen the ideas of their majesty,—What must be the opinions of their origin, when, instead of that glorious description, which scripture gives of " The Ancient of Days, " who inhabiteth eternity," they gravely assigned particular times and places for the births and education of their gods ; so that there was scarce a hamlet, or even a desert, in Greece or Italy, which was not rendered memorable by some favor or accident of this kind ?

And, what rendered such conceits the more gross and absurd, they supposed not only that the gods they worshiped, had a beginning ; but that they were produced by fleshly parents ; and accordingly, they attributed to them corporeal shapes and difference of sex : And, indeed, in this they were a little consistent ; for their deities seemed to partake so much of the frailties to which flesh and blood is subject, that their history and their pedigree were much of a piece, and might reasonably claim each other. For they imputed to them, not only the human defects of ignorance, want, fear, and the like, but the most unmanly sensualities, and, what would be a reproach to human nature, such as cruelty, adulteries, rapes, incests ; and, even in the accounts which we have from the sublimest of their poets,

—what are they, but the anecdotes of their squabbles amongst themselves, their intrigues, their jealousies, their ungovernable transports of choler, —nay, even their thefts, their drunkenness, and bloodshed?

Here let us stop a moment, and inquire, What was Reason doing all this time, to be so miserably insulted and abused? Where held she her empire, whilst her bulwarks were thus borne down, and her first principles of religion and truth lay buried under them? If she was able, by herself, to regain the power she had lost, and put a stop to this folly and confusion, why did she not? If she was not able to resist this torrent alone——the point is given up—she wanted aid; and revelation has given it.

But tho' reason, you will say, could not overthrow these popular mistakes, yet it saw the folly of them, and was at all times able to disprove them.

No doubt it was; and it is certain too, that the more diligent inquirers after truth, did not in fact, fall into these absurd notions, which, by the way, is an observation more to our purpose than theirs who usually make it, and shows, that, tho' their reasons were good,—that there always wanted something which they could not supply, to give them such weight, as would lay an obligation upon mankind to embrace them, and make that to be a law, which otherwise was but an opinion without force.

Besides,——which is a more direct answer, ——tho' it is true, the ablest men gave no credit to the multiplicity of gods—(for they had a religion for themselves, and another for the populace) yet they were guilty of what in effect was equally bad, in holding an opinion which necessarily supported these very mistakes,——namely, that, as different nations had different gods, it

was every man's duty I suppose (more for quietness than principle's sake) to worship the gods of his country; which, by the way, considering their numbers, was not so easy a task;—for, what with celestial gods, and gods aerial, terrestrial and infernal, with the goddesses their wives and mistresses, upon the lowest computation, the heathen world acknowledged no less than thirty thousand deities, all which claimed the rites and ceremonies of religious worship.

But, it will be said, allowing the bulk of mankind were under such delusions——they were still but speculative——What was that to their practice?—However defective in their theology and more abstracted points,———their morality was no way connected with it.——There is no need, that the everlasting laws of justice and mercy should be fetched down from above,——since they can be proved from more obvious mediums;——they were as necessary for the same good purpose of society then, as now; and we may presume they saw their interest, and pursued it.

That the necessities of society, and the impossibilities of its subsisting otherwise, would point out the convenience, or, if you will—the duty of social virtues, is unquestionable:——But I firmly deny, that therefore religion and morality are independent of each other: They appear so far from it, that I cannot conceive how the one, in the true and meritorious sense of the duty, can act without the influence of the other. Surely the most exalted motive which can only be depended upon for the uniform practice of virtue,———must come down from *above*,——from the love and imitation of that Being, in whose sight we wish to render ourselves acceptable; this will operate at all times and all places——in the darkest closet, as much as on the greatest and most public theatres of the world.

But with different conceptions of the Deity, or such impure ones as they entertained, is it to be doubted, whether, in the many secret trials of our virtue, we should not determine our cases of conscience with much the same kind of casuistry as that of the Libertine in Terence, who being engaged in a very unjustifiable pursuit, and happening to see a picture which represented a known story of Jupiter in a like transaction,—argued the matter thus with himself :——If the great Jupiter could not restrain his appetites, and deny himself an indulgence of this kind,——*ego Homuncio, hoc non facerem ?* shall I, a mortal,——an inconsiderable mortal too, clothed with infirmities of flesh and blood,——pretend to a virtue, which the father of gods and men could not ?—— What insolence !

The conclusion was natural enough ;—and as so great a master of nature puts it into the mouth of one of his principal characters, no doubt the language was then understood ;—it was copied from common life, and was not the first application which had been made of the story.

It will scarce admit of a question, Whether vice would not naturally grow bold upon the credit of such an example ;—or, Whether such impressions did not influence the lives and morals of many in the heathen world ?—And, had there been no other proof of it, but the natural tendency of such notions to corrupt them, it had been sufficient reason to believe it was so.

No doubt, there is sufficient room for amendment in the Christian world,—and we may be said to be a very corrupt and bad generation of men, considering what motives we have, from the purity of our religion, and the force of its sanctions, to make us better :——Yet, still I affirm, if these restraints were taken off, the world would be infinitely worse :—And tho' some sense of morali-

ty might be preserved, as it was in the heathen world, with the more considerate of us, yet, in general, I am persuaded, that the bulk of mankind, upon such a supposition, would soon come to *live without* GOD *in the world*, and, in a short time differ from Indians themselves in little else but their complexions.

If, after all, the Christian religion has not left a sufficient provision against the wickedness of the world,—the short and true answer is this, That there can be none.

It is sufficient to leave us without excuse, that the excellency of this institution, in its doctrine, its precepts, and its examples, has a proper tendency to make us a virtuous and a happy people; —every page is an address to our hearts to win them to those purposes.—But, as religion was not intended to work upon men by force and natural necessity, but by moral persuasion, which sets good and evil before them;—so, if men have power to do the evil, and choose the good,—and will abuse it,—this cannot be avoided.——Religion ever implies a freedom of choice;—and all the beings in the world which have it, were created free to stand, and free to fall;—and therefore, men, who will not be persuaded by this way of address, must expect, and be contented to be reckoned with, according to the talent they have received.

SERMON XXVII.

The abuses of Conscience considered.

HEBREWS, xiii. 18.

For we trust we have a good conscience.——

TRUST!——Trust we have a good conscience!——Surely, you will say, if there is any thing in this life which a man may depend upon, and to the knowledge of which he is capable of arriving, upon the most indisputable evidence, it must be this very thing,—Whether he has a good conscience or no.

If a man thinks at all, he cannot well be a stranger to the true state of this account:——He must be privy to his own thoughts and desires—He must remember his past pursuits, and know certainly the true springs and motives, which, in general, have governed the actions of his life.

In other matters, we may be deceived by false appearances; and, as the wise man complains, *Hardly do we guess aright at the things that are upon the earth, and with labor do we find the things that are before us.*——But here, the mind has all the evidence and facts within herself;——is conscious of the web she has wove;——knows its texture and fineness, and the exact share which every passion has had in working upon the several designs which virtue or vice has planned before her.

Now,——as conscience is nothing else but the knowledge which the mind has within itself of this; and the judgment, either of approbation or censure, which it unavoidably makes upon the successive actions of our lives,——it is plain, you will say, from the very terms of the proposition, whenever this inward testimony goes against a man, and he stands self-accused,——that he must

necessarily be a *guilty man*. And on the contrary, when the report is favorable on his side, and his heart condemns him not,—that it is not a matter of *trust*, as the apostle intimates, but a matter of certainty and fact, that the *conscience* is *good*, and that the *man* must be *good* also.

At first sight, this may seem to be the true state of the case;—and I make no doubt but the knowledge of right and wrong is so truly impressed upon the mind of man, that, did no such thing ever happen, as that the conscience of a man, by long habits of sin, might (as the scripture assures us it may) insensibly become hard; and, like some tender part of his body, by much stress and continual hard usage, lose, by degrees, that nice sense and perception with which GOD and nature endowed it:——Did this never happen;—or, was it certain that self-love could never hang the least bias upon the judgment;—or, that the little interests below, could raise up and perplex the faculties of our upper regions, and encompass them about with clouds and thick darkness:—Could no such thing as favor and affection enter this sacred court:—Did WIT disdain to take a bribe in it, or was ashamed to show its face as an advocate for an unwarrantable enjoyment:——Or, lastly, were we assured, that INTEREST stood always unconcerned whilst the cause was hearing,—And that PASSION never got into the judgment seat, and pronounced sentence in the tead of reason, which is supposed always to preside and determine upon the case:—Was this truly so, as the objection must suppose, no doubt, then the religious and moral state of a man would be exactly what he himself esteemed it;—and the guilt or innocence of every man's life could be known, in general, by no better measure than the degrees of his own approbation or censure.

I own, in one case, whenever a man's consci-

ence does accuse him (as it seldom errs on that side) that he is guilty; and, unless in melancholy and hypochondriac cases, we may safely pronounce, that there are always sufficient grounds for the accusation.

But the converse of the proposition will not hold true,——namely, That wherever there is guilt, the conscience must accuse;—and, if it does not that, a man is therefore innocent,—This is not fact:——So that the common consolation which some good christian or other is hourly administering to himself——That he thanks GOD his mind does not misgive him;—and that, consequently, he has a good conscience, because he has a quiet one——As current as the inference is, and as infallible as the rule appears at first sight, yet when you look nearer to it, and try the truth of this rule upon plain facts,—you find it liable to so much error, from a false application of it;——the principle on which it goes, so often perverted;——the whole force of it lost, and sometimes so vilely cast away, that it is painful to produce the common examples from human life which confirm this account.

A man shall be vicious, and utterly debauched in his principles;—exceptionable in his conduct to the world:—Shall live shameless,—in the open commission of a sin which no reason or pretence can justify;—a sin, by which, contrary to all the workings of humanity within, he shall ruin, for ever, the deluded partner of his guilt,—rob her of her best dowry;—and not only cover her own head with dishonor, but involve a whole virtuous family in shame and sorrow for her sake.—Surely,—you will think, conscience must lead such a man a troublesome life:—He can have no rest, night or day, from its reproaches.

Alas! conscience had something else to do, all this time, than break in upon him; as *Elijah* re-

proached the god *Baal*, this *domestic god* was either *talking, or pursuing, or was in a journey, or peradventure he slept and could not be awoke.*—Perhaps he was gone out in company with HONOR, to fight a duel;—to pay off some debt at play,—or dirty annuity, the bargain of his lust.——Perhaps, conscience, all this time, was engaged at home, talking aloud against petty larceny, and executing vengeance upon some such puny crimes as his fortune and rank in life secured him against all temptation of committing;—so that he lives as merrily, sleeps as soundly in his bed,—and, at last, meets death with as much unconcern,—perhaps, much more so than a much better man.

Another is sordid, unmerciful;—a strait-hearted, selfish wretch,—incapable either of private friendships, or public spirit.—Take notice how he passes by the widow and orphan in their distress; and sees all the miseries incident to human life, without a sigh or a prayer.—Shall not conscience rise up and sting him on such occasions? No.——Thank GOD, there is no occasion.——'I pay every man his own;—I have no 'fornication to answer to my conscience;——no 'faithless vows or promises to make up;—I have 'debauched no man's wife or child.—Thank GOD, 'I am not as other men, adulterers, unjust, or 'even as this libertine, who stands before me.'

A third is crafty and designing in his nature.—View his whole life, it is nothing else but a cunning contexture of dark arts and unequitable subterfuges, basely to defeat the true intent of all laws, plain-dealing, and the safe enjoyment of our several properties.——You will see such a one, working out a frame of little designs upon the ignorance and perplexities of the poor and needy man;—shall raise a fortune upon the inexperience of a youth, or the unsuspecting temper of his friend, who would have trusted him with his life.

—When old age comes on, and repentance calls him to look back upon this black account, and state it over again with his conscience——conscience looks into the *Statutes at Large*,—finds, perhaps, no *express law* broken by what he has done,—perceives no penalty or forfeiture incurred,—sees no scourge waving over his head——or prison opening its gate upon him.—What is there to affright his conscience?—Conscience has got safely entrenched behind the letter of the law, sits there invulnerable, fortified with *cases* and *reports* so strongly on all sides,——that it is not preaching can dispossess it of its hold.

Another shall want even this refuge,——shall break through all this ceremony of slow chicane; scorns the doubtful workings of secret plots and cautious trains to bring about his purpose.—See the barefaced villian, how he cheats, lies, perjures, robs, murders—Horrid! But indeed, much better was not to be expected in this case.—The poor man was in the dark!——his priest had got the keeping of his conscience,——and all he had let him know of it was, That he must believe in the *Pope*;——go to mass;—cross himself;——tell his beads;——be a good Catholic; and that this in all conscience was enough to carry him to heaven. What!——if he perjures?——Why,——he had a mental reservation in it. But if he is so wicked and abandoned a wretch as you represent him,——if he robs, or murders, will not conscience, on every such act, receive a wound itself?——Ay——but the man has carried it to confession,—the wound digests there, and will do well enough,———and in a short time be quite healed up by absolution.

O *Popery!* what hast thou to answer for?—when, not content with the too many natural and fatal ways through which the heart is every day thus treacherous to itself above all things,———

Thou hast wilfully set open this wide gate of deceit before the face of this unwary *Traveller*—— too apt, GOD knows, to go astray of himself,—— and confidently speak peace to his soul, when there is no peace.

Of this, the common instances, which I have drawn out of life, are too notorious, to require much evidence. If any man doubts the reality of them, or thinks it impossible for man to be such a bubble to himself,——I must refer him a moment to his reflections, and shall then venture to trust the appeal with his own heart. Let him consider in how different a degree of detestation, numbers of wicked actions stand *there;* tho' equally bad and vicious in their own natures——he will soon find, that such of them as strong inclination or custom have prompted him to commit, are generally dressed out and painted with all the false beauties which a soft and flattering hand can give them; and that the others, to which he feels no propensity, appear, at once, naked and deformed, surrounded with all the true circumstances of folly and dishonor.

When David surprised Saul sleeping in the cave, and cut off the skirt of his robe,—we read, his heart smote him for what he had done.——— But, in the matter of Uriah, where a faithful and gallant servant, whom he ought to have loved and honored, fell to make way for his lust,—where *conscience* had so much greater reason to take the alarm——his heart smote him not.——A whole year had almost passed from the first commission of that crime——to the time Nathan was sent to reprove him; and we read not once of the least sorrow or compunction of heart, which he testified during all that time, for what he had done.

Thus conscience, this once able monitor,—— placed on high as a judge within us,—and intended, by our Maker, as a just and equitable one too,

——by an unhappy train of causes and impediments,——takes often such imperfect cognizance of what passes,—does its office so negligently,—sometimes so corruptly, that it is not to be trusted alone: And therefore, we find, there is a necessity, an absolute necessity, of joining another principle with it, to aid, if not govern its determinations.

So that if you would form a just judgment, of what is of infinite importance to you not to be misled in—namely, in what degree of real merit you stand, either as an honest man,——and useful citizen,—a faithful subject to your king,——or a good servant to your GOD,—call in RELIGION and MORALITY.—Look——What is written in the law of GOD!—How readest thou?——Consult calm reason, and the unchangeable obligations of justice and truth—What say they?

Let conscience determine the matter upon these reports;—and then, if *thy heart condemn thee not*,——which is the case the apostle supposes,——the rule will be infallible,—*Thou wilt have confidence towards* GOD;———that is, have just grounds to believe the judgment thou hast passed upon thyself *is* the judgment of GOD, and nothing else but an anticipation of that righteous sentence, which shall be pronounced hereafter upon thee, by that BEING, before whom thou art finally to give an account of thy actions.

Blessed is the man, indeed, then, as the author of the book of *Ecclesiasticus* expresses it, *who is not pricked with the multitude of his sins.*——— *Blessed is the man whose heart hath not condemned him, and who is not fallen from his hope in the Lord. Whether he be rich*, continues he, *or whether he be poor,—if he have a good heart* (a heart thus guided and informed)———*he shall at all times rejoice in a cheerful countenance;—his mind shall tell him more than seven watchmen that sit*

above upon a tower on high. In the dearkest doubts it shall conduct him safer than a thousand casuists; and give the state he lives in a better security for his behavior, than all the clauses and restrictions put together, which the wisdom of the legislature is forced to multiply,—forced, I say, as things stand; human laws, being, not a matter of original choice, but of pure necessity, brought in to fence against the mischievous effects of those consciences which are no law unto themselves: Wisely intending, by the many provisions made, ——in all such corrupt or misguided cases, where principle and the checks of conscience will not make us upright,——to supply their force, and, by the terrors of gaols and halters, oblige us to it.

To have the fear of God before our eyes; and, in our mutual dealings with each other, to govern our actions by the eternal measures of right and wrong;—the first of these will comprehend the duties of religion,—the second, those of morality; which are so inseparably connected together, that you cannot divide these two *Tables*, even in imagination, (tho' the attempt is often made in practice), without breaking, and mutually destroying them both.

I said the attempt is often made;——and so it is;——there being nothing more common, than to see a man, who has no sense at all of religion,—and, indeed, has *so much* of honesty, as to pretend to none,—who would yet take it as the bitterest affront, should you but hint at a suspicion of his moral character,—or imagine he was not conscientiously just and scrupulous to the uttermost mite.

When there is some appearance that it is so,—tho' one is not willing even to suspect the appearance of so great a virtue as moral honesty;——*yet*, were we to look into the grounds of it, in the

present case, I am pursuaded we should find little reason to envy such a man the honor of his motive.

Let him declaim as pompously as he can on the subject, it will be found, at last, to rest upon no better foundation than either his interest, his pride, his ease,—or some such little and changeable passion, as will give us but small dependence upon his actions in matters of great stress.

Give me leave to illustrate this by an example. I know the banker I deal with, or the physician I usually call in, to be neither of them men of much religion:—I hear them make a jest of it every day, and treat all its sanctions with so much scorn and contempt, as to put the matter past doubt, Well,——notwithstanding this, I put my fortune into the hands of the one,—and, what is dearer still to me, I trust my life to the honest skill of the other.——Now, let me examine what is my reason for this great confidence.——Why, ——in the first place, I believe that there is no probability that either of them will employ the power I put into their hands, to my disadvantage. I consider, that honesty serves the purposes of this life.—I know their success in the world depends upon the fairness of their characters;—that they cannot hurt me, without hurting themselves more.

But, put it otherwise,——namely, that interest lay, for once, on the other side;—that a case should happen, wherein the one, without stain to his reputation, could secrete my fortune, and leave me naked in the world;—or, that the other could send me out of it, and enjoy an estate by my death, without dishonor to himself or his art.—In this case, what hold have I of either of them?—Religion, the strongest of all motives, is out of the question.—Interest, the next most powerful motive in this world, is strongly against me.—I have nothing left to cast into the scale, to balance

this temptation.—I must lie at the mercy of honor,—or some such capricious principle.—Strait security! for two of my best and most valuable blessings,—my property and my life.

As, therefore, we can have no dependence upon morality without religion;——so, on the other hand, there is nothing better to be expected from religion without morality;—nor can any man be supposed to discharge his duties to GOD, (whatever fair appearances he may hang out that he does so), if he does not pay as conscientious a regard to the duties which he owes his fellow creature.

This is a point, capable, in itself, of strict demonstration.—Nevertheless, it is no rarity to see a man, whose real moral merit stands very low, who yet entertains the highest notion of himself, in the light of a devout and a religious man. He shall not only be covetous, revengeful, implacable,—but even wanting in points of common honesty:—Yet, because he talks loud against the infidelity of the age,—is zealous for some points of religion,—goes twice a day to church,—attends the sacraments,——and amuses himself with a few instrumental duties of religion,—shall cheat his conscience into a judgment, that, for this, he is a religious man, and has discharged faithfully his duty to GOD: And you will find, that such a man, thro' force of this delusion, generally looks down with spiritual pride upon every other man who has less affectation of piety, though, perhaps, ten times more moral honesty than himself.

This is likewise a sore evil under the sun: And I believe there is no one mistaken principle, which, for its time, has wrought more serious mischiefs. For a general proof of this, examine the history of the *Romish* church.—See—what scenes of cruelty, murders, rapines, bloodshed, have all been sanctified by a religion not strictly governed by morality.

In how many kingdoms of the world, has the crusading sword of this misguided Saint-Errant spared neither age, or merit, or sex, or condition ?—And, as he fought under the banners of a religion, which set him loose from justice and humanity, he showed none,—mercilessly trampled upon both,—heard neither the cries of the unfortunate, nor pitied their distresses.

If the testimony of past centuries, in this matter, is not sufficient,—consider, at this instant, how the votaries of that religion are every day thinking to do service and honor to GOD, by actions which are a dishonor and scandal to themselves.

To be convinced of this, go with me, for a moment, into the prisons of the inquisition.—Behold *Religion*, with Mercy and Justice chained down under her feet,—there sitting ghastly upon a black tribunal, propped up with racks and instruments of torment.—Hark !—What a piteous groan !—See the melancholy wretch who uttered it, just brought forth to undergo the anguish of a mock trial, and endure the utmost pains that a studied system of *religious cruelty* has been able to invent.—Behold this helpless victim delivered up to his tormentors.—His body so wasted with sorrow and long confinement, you will see every nerve and muscle as it suffers.—Observe the last movement of that horrid engine. What convulsions it has thrown him into !—Consider the nature of the posture in which he now lies stretched.—What exquisite torture he endures by it !—It is all Nature can bear.—Good GOD ! see how it keeps his weary soul hanging upon his trembling lips,—willing to take its leave, but not suffered to depart. Behold the unhappy wretch led back to his cell—dragged out of it again to meet the flames—and the insults of his last agonies, which this principle—this principle, that there *can* be no religion without morality, has prepared for him.

The *surest way* to try the merit of any disput-

ed notion,—is, to trace down the consequences such a notion has produced, and compare them with the *spirit* of Christianity.—It is the short and decisive rule, which our SAVIOUR has left for these, and such like cases, and is worth a thousand arguments—*By their fruits*, says he, *ye shall know them.*

Thus, religion, and morality, like fast friends and natural allies, can never be set at variance, without the mutual ruin and dishonor of them both;—and whoever goes about this unfriendly office, is no well-wisher to either;—and, whatever he pretends, he deceives his own heart, and, I fear, his morality as well as his religion will be vain.

I will add no farther to the length of this discourse, than by two or three short and independent rules, deducible from what has been said.

1st, Whenever a man talks loudly against religion, always suspect that it is not his reason, but his passions which have got the better of his creed.—A *bad life* and a *good belief* are disagreeable and troublesome neighbors; and where they separate, depend upon it, it is for no other cause but quietness sake.

2dly, When a man thus represented, tells you, in any particular instance, that such a thing goes *against* his conscience,—always believe he means exactly the same thing as when he tells you such a thing goes against his stomach,—a present want of appetite being generally the true cause of both.

In a word;—trust that man in nothing,—who has not a good conscience in every thing.

And, in your own case remember this plain distinction, a mistake in which has ruined thousands,—That your conscience is not a law;—no,—GOD and Reason made the law, and has placed conscience within you to determine,—not like an *Asiatic Cadi*, according to the ebbs and flows of his own passions; but, like a *British Judge* in this land of liberty, who makes no new law, but faithfully declares that glorious law which he finds already written.

SERMON XXVIII.

Temporal Advantages of Religion.

PROV. iii. 17.

Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.

THERE are two opinions which the inconsiderate are apt to take upon trust.——The first is,—a vicious life is a life of liberty, pleasure, and happy advantages.——The second is—and which is the converse of the first,—that a religious life is a servile and most uncomfortable state.

The first breach which the devil made upon human innocence, was by the help of the first of these suggestions, when he told Eve, that by eating of the tree of knowledge, she should be as GOD, that is, she should reap some high and strange felicity, from doing what was forbidden her.—But I need not repeat the success.—Eve learned the difference between good and evil by her transgression, which she knew not before;—but then she fatally learned at the same time, that the difference was only this,———that good is that which can only give the mind pleasure and comfort—and that evil is that which must necessarily be attended, sooner or later, with shame and sorrow.

As the deceiver of mankind thus began his triumph over our race;——so has he carried it on, ever since, by the very same argument of delusion;——that is by possessing mens minds early with great expectations of the present incomes of sin,—making them dream of wonderous gratifications they are to feel, in following their appetites in a forbidden way,—making them fancy, that their own grapes yield not so delicious a taste as their neighbor's, and that they shall quench their thirst with more pleasure at his fountain, than at their own. This is the opinion which at first too

generally prevails,—till experience and proper seasons of reflection, make us all, at one time or other, confess—that our counsellor has been (as from the beginning) an impostor,—and that, instead of fulfilling these hopes of gain and sweetness in what is forbidden—that, on the contrary, every unlawful enjoyment leads only to bitterness and loss.

The second opinion, or, That a religious life is a servile and uncomfortable state, has proved a no less fatal and capital false principle in the conduct of inexperience thro' life,——the foundation of which mistake arising chiefly from this previous wrong judgment,—that true happiness and freedom lies in a man's always following his own humor,—that to live by moderate and prescribed rules, is to live without joy,—that not to prosecute our passions, is to be cowards, and to forego every thing for the tedious distance of a future life.

Was it true, that a virtuous man could have no pleasure, but what should arise from that remote prospect,——I own, we are by nature so goaded on by the desire of present happiness, that, was that the case, thousands would faint under the discouragement of so remote an expectation.

But, in the mean time, the scriptures give us a very different prospect of this matter. There we are told, that the service of God is true liberty,—that the yoke of christianity is easy, in comparison of that yoke which must be brought upon us by any other system of living;—and the text tells of wisdom—by which is meant religion, that it has pleasantness in its way, as well as glory in its end—that it will bring us peace and joy, such as the world cannot give.—So that, upon examining the truth of this assertion, we shall be set right in this error, by seeing that a religious man's happiness does not stand at so tedious a distance——but is so present, and, indeed, so inseparable from

him, as to be felt and tasted every hour;—— and of this, even the vicious can hardly be insensible, from what he may perceive to spring up in his mind, from any casual act of virtue. And tho' it is a pleasure that properly belongs to the good, —yet, let any one try the experiment, and he will see what is meant by that moral delight, arising from the conscience of well-doing.—Let him but refresh the bowels of the needy,—let him comfort the broken hearted——or check an appetite ——or overcome a temptation——or receive an affront with temper and meekness,—and he shall find the tacit praise of what he has done, darting thro' his mind, accompanied with a sincere pleasure;—conscience playing the monitor even to the loose and most inconsiderate, in their most casual acts of well-doing, and is, like a voice whispering behind, and saying—This is the way of pleasantness—this is the path of peace—walk in it.

But, to do farther justice to the text, we must look beyond this inward recompence, which is always inseparable from virtue,—and take a view of the outward advantages, which are as inseparable from it, and which the apostle particularly refers to, when it is said, Godliness has the promise of this life, as well as that which is to come: —And in this argument it is, that religion appears in all its glory and strength—unanswerable in all its obligations;—that besides the principal work which it does for us, in securing our future well-being in the other world, it is likewise the most effectual means to promote our present,— and that not only *morally*, upon account of that reward which virtuous actions do entitle a man unto, from a just and wise Providence,—but by a natural tendency in themselves, which the duties of religion have *to procure* us riches, health, reputation, credit, and all those things wherein our temporal cappiness is thought to consist,—and this not on-

ly in promoting the well-being of particular persons, but of public communities, and of mankind in general,---agreeable to what the wise man has left us on record, that righteousness exalteth a nation :.....Insomuch,.....that could we, in considering this argument, suppose ourselves to be in a capacity of expostulating with GOD concerning the terms upon which we would submit to his government.....and to choose the laws ourselves, which we would be bound to observe, it would be impossible for the wit of man, to frame any other proposals, which, upon all accounts, would be more advantageous to our own interests, than those very conditions to which we are obliged by the rules of religion and virtue. And in this does the reasonableness of christianity, and the beauty and wisdom of Providence, appear most eminently towards mankind, in governing us by such laws, as do most apparently tend to make us happy,..... and, in a word, in making that (in his mercy) to be our duty, which in his wisdom he knows to be our interest,.....that is to say, what is most conducive to the ease and comfort of our mind,....the health and strength of our body,.....the honor and prosperity of our state and condition,.....the friendship and good-will of our fellow-creatures; ....to the attainment of all which, no more effectual means can possibly be made use of, than that plain direction,.....to lead an uncorrupted life, and to do the thing which is right,....to use no deceit in our tongue, nor do evil to our neighbor.

For the better imprinting of which truth in your memories, give me leave to offer a few things to your consideration.

The first is,....that justice and honesty contribute very much towards all the faculties of the mind : I mean, that it clears up the understanding from that mist, which dark and crooked designs are apt to raise in it,.....and that it keeps up regu-

larity in the affections, by suffering no lusts or *lye-ends* to disorder them :.....that it likewise preserves the mind from all damps of grief and melancholy, which are the sure consequences of unjust actions ;....and that, by such an improvement of the faculties, it makes a man so much the abler to discern, and so much the more cheerful, active and diligent to mind his business.....Light is sown for the righteous, says the prophet, and gladness for the upright in heart.

Secondly, let it be observed,.....that in the continuance and course of a virtuous man's affairs, there is little probability of his falling into considerable disappointments or calamities ;....not only because guarded by the providence of God, but that honesty is in its own nature the freest from danger.

First, because such a one lays no projects, which it is the interest of another to blast, and therefore needs no indirect methods or deceitful practices, to secure his interest, by undermining others.....The paths of virtue are plain and strait ; so that the blind, persons of the meanest capacity, shall not err.....Dishonesty requires skill to conduct it, and as great art to conceal.....what it is every one's interest to detect. And I think I need not remind you, how oft it happens in attempts of this kind....where worldly men, in haste to be rich, have over-run the only means to it,..... and, for want of laying their contrivances with proper cunning, or managing them with proper secrecy and advantage, have lost for ever, what they might have certainly secured by honesty and plain-dealing :.....the general causes of the disappointments in their business, or of unhappiness in their lives, lying but too manifestly in their own disorderly passions, which, by attempting to carry them a shorter way to riches and honor, disappoint them both for ever, and make plain, their ruin is from themselves, and that they eat the fruits which their own *hands* have watered and ripened.

Consider, in the third place, that the religious and moral man (one of which he cannot be without the other) not only takes the surest course for success in his affairs, but is disposed to procure a help which never enters into the thoughts of a wicked one; for, being conscious of upright intentions, he can look towards heaven, and, with some assurance, recommend his affairs to GOD's blessing and direction:—Whereas the fraudulent and dishonest man dares not call for GOD's blessing upon his designs,—or if he does, he knows it is in vain to expect it. Now, a man who believes that he has GOD on his side, acts with another sort of life and courage, than he who knows he stands alone;—like Esau, with his hand against every man, and every man's hand against his.

The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry,—but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.

Consider, in the fourth place, that in all good governments, who understand their own interest, the upright and honest man stands much fairer for preferment, and much more likely to be employed in all things where fidelity is wanted;——for all men, however the case stands with themselves, they love at least to find honesty in those they trust; nor is there any usage we more hardly digest, than that of being outwitted and deceived.—This is so true an observation, that the greatest knaves have no other way to get into business, but by counterfeiting honesty, and pretending to be what they are not; and when the imposture is discovered, as it is a thousand to one but it will, I have just said, what must be the certain consequence:—For, when such a one falls,—as he has none to help him,—so he seldom rises again.——

This brings us to a fifth particular, in vindication of the text,—That a virtuous man has the strong advantage on his side, (the reverse of the

last) that the more and the longer he is known, so much the better is he loved,——so much the more trusted,——so that his reputation and his fortune have a gradual increase ;——and if calamities or cross-accidents should bear him down,—(as no one stands out of their reach in this world),——if he should fall, who would not pity his distress,—— who would not stretch forth his hand to raise him from the ground !—— Wherever there was virtue, he might expect to meet a friend and a brother. And this is not merely speculation, but fact, confirmed by numberless examples in life, of men falling into misfortunes, whose characters and tried probity have raised them helps, and bore them up, when every other help has forsook them.

Lastly, to sum up the account of the temporal advantages which probity has on its side,—let us not forget that greatest of all happiness, which the text refers to,—in the expression, of all its paths being peace,—peace and content of mind, arising from the consciousness of virtue, which is the true and only foundation of all earthly satisfaction; and, where that is wanting, whatever other enjoyments you bestow upon a wicked man, they will as soon add a cubit to his stature as to his happiness.—In the midst of the highest entertainments, —this like the hand-writing upon the wall, will be enough to spoil and disrelish the feast ;——but much more so, when the tumult and hurry of delight is over,—when all is still and silent,—when the sinner has nothing to do but attend its lashes and remorses ;—and this, in spite of all the common arts of diversion, will be often the case of every wicked man ;—for we cannot live always upon the stretch ;—our faculties will not bear constant pleasure, any more than constant pain ;—there will be some vacancies ; and when there are, they will be sure to be filled with uncomfortable thoughts and black reflections.—So that, setting aside the

great after-reckoning, the pleasures of the wicked are over-bought, even in this world.——

I conclude with one observation upon the whole of this argument, which is this——

Notwithstanding the great force with which it has been often urged by good writers,—there are many cases which it may not reach,—wherein vicious men may seem to enjoy their portion of this life,——and live as happy, and fall into as few troubles as other men :....And therefore, it is prudent not to lay more stress upon this argument than it will bear :.....But always remember to call in to our aid, that great and more unanswerable argument, which will answer the most doubtful cases which can be stated,.....and that is, the certainty of a future life, which chistianity has brought to light. However men may differ in their opinions of the usefulness of virtue for our present purposes, no one was ever so absurd, as to deny it served our best and last interest,—— when the little interests of this life were at an end: ....Upon which consideration we should always lay the great weight,....it is the fittest to bear the strongest appeal, and is the most unchangeable motive that can govern our actions at all times. However, as every good argument on the side of religion, should, in proper times, be made use of, ...it is fit sometimes to examine this,....by proving virtue is not even destitute of a present reward, ...but carries in her hand a sufficient recompence for all the self-denials she may occasion :....she is pleasant in the way,....as well as in the end ;....her ways being ways of pleasantness, and all her paths peace.....But it is her greatest and most distinguished glory,.....that she befriends us hereafter, and brings us peace at the last ;.....and this is a portion she can never be disinherited of :....which may God of his mercy grant us all, for the sake of Jesus Christ.

SERMON XXIX.

Our Conversation in Heaven.

PHILIP iii. 20. 1ſt Part.

For our conversation is in heaven.

THESE words are the conclusion of the account which St. Paul renders of himself, to justify that particular part of his conduct and proceeding—his leaving so strangely, and deserting his Jewesh rites and ceremonies, to which he was known to have been formerly so much attached, and in defence of which he had been so warmly and so remarkably engaged. This, as it had been matter of provocation against him amongst his own countrymen the Jews, so was it no less an occasion of surprize to the Gentiles;—that a person of his great character, interest and reputation,——one who was descended from a tribe of Israel, deeply skilled in the professions, and zealous in the *observances of the straitest sect of that religion*;—who had their tenets instilled into him from his tender years, under the institution of the ablest masters;—a Pharisee himself,—the son of a Pharisee, and brought up at the feet of Gamaliel,—one that was so deeply interested, and an accessory in the persecution of another religion, just then newly come up;——a religion, to which his whole sect, as well as himself, had been always the bitterest and most inveterate enemies, and were constantly upbraided as such, by the first founder of it:—That a person so beset, and hemmed in with interests and prejudices on all sides, should, after all, turn proselyte to the very religion he had hated;——a religion too, under the most universal contempt of any then in the world,....the chiefs and leaders of it men of the lowest birth and education, without any advanta-

ges of parts or learning, or other endowments to recommend them:——That he should quit and abandon all his former privileges, to become merely a fellow-laborer with these;——that he should give up the reputation he had acquired amongst his brethren, by the study and labors of a whole life;——that he should give up his friends,—his relations and family, from whom he estranged and banished himself for life:——This was an event so very extraordinary,—so odd and unaccountable,——that it might well confound the minds of men to answer for it.——It was not to be accounted for upon the common rules and measures of proceeding in human life.———

The apostle, therefore, since no one else could so well do it for him, comes, in this chapter, to give an explanation why he had thus forsaken so many worldly advantages,--which was owing to a greater and more unconquerable affection to a better and more valuable interest;——that in the poor persecuted faith,——which he had once reproached and destroyed,——he had now found such a fulness of divine grace,—such unfathomable depths of GOD's infinite mercy, and love towards mankind, that he could think nothing too much to part with, in order to his embracing christianity;——nay, he accounted all things but loss,——that is, less than nothing, for the excellency of the knowledge of JESUS CHRIST.

The apostle, after this apology for himself,——proceeds, in the second verse before the text, to give a very different representation of the wordly views and sensual principles of other pretending teachers,——who had set themselves up as an example for men to walk by, against whom he renews this caution:——For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you, even weeping, that they are the enemies to the cross of CHRIST,——whose end is destruction,——whose

god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things——*Phronountes* ——relish them, making them the only object of their wishes,——taking aim at nothing better, and nothing higher.———But *our* conversation, says he in the text, is in heaven. We Christians, who have embraced a persecuted faith, are governed by other considerations,—have greater and nobler views. Here we consider ourselves only as pilgrims and strangers;—our home is another country, where we are continually tending: There our hearts and affections are placed: And when the few days of our pilgrimage shall be over, there shall we return, where a quiet habitation and a perpetual rest is designed and prepared for us forever. Our conversation is in heaven, from whence, says he, we also look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto him. It is observable, that St. Peter represents the state of Christians, under the same image of strangers on earth, whose city and proper home is heaven:——He makes use of that relation of citizens of heaven, as a strong argument for a pure and holy life,—beseeching them, *as* pilgrims and strangers *here*, as men whose interests and connections are of so short a date, and so trifling a nature,—to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul, that is, unfit it for its heavenly country, and give it a disrelish to the enjoyment of that pure and spiritualized happiness, of which that region must consist, wherein there shall in no wise enter any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination.———The apostle tells us, that without holiness, no man shall see God; by which, no doubt, he means, that a virtuous life is the only medium of happiness and terms of salvation,—

which can only give us admission into heaven.—But some of our divines carry the assertion farther, that without holiness,—without some previous similitude, wrought in the faculties of the mind, corresponding with the nature of the purest of beings, who is to be the object of our fruition hereafter;——that it is not morally only, but physically impossible for it to be happy;—and that an impure and polluted soul, is not only unworthy of so pure a presence as the Spirit of God, but even incapable of enjoying it, could it be admitted.

And here, not to feign a long hypothesis, as some have done, of a sinner's being admitted into heaven,—with a particular description of his condition and behavior there,—we need only consider, that the supreme good, like any other good, is of a relative nature, and consequently the enjoyment of it must require some qualification in the faculty, as well as the enjoyment of any other good does;———there must be something antecedent in the disposition and temper, which will render that good—a good to that individual,——otherwise, though (it is true) it may be possessed,—yet it never can be enjoyed————

Preach to a voluptuous epicure, who knows of no other happiness in this world but what arises from good eating and drinking,——such a one, in the apostle's language, whose god was his belly;—preach to him of the abstractions of the soul, tell of its flights, and brisker motion in the pure regions of immensity;—represent to him that saints and angels eat not,—but that the spirit of a man lives forever upon wisdom and holiness, and heavenly contemplations:——Why, the only effect would be, that the fat glutton would stare a while upon the preacher, and in a few minutes fall fast asleep.—No; if you would catch his attention, and make him take in your discourse

greedily,—you must preach to him out of the Alcoran,—talk of the raptures of sensual enjoyments, and of the pleasures of the perpetual feasting which Mahomet has described;—there you touch upon a note which awakens and sinks into the inmost recesses of his soul;—without which, discourse as wisely and abstractedly as you will of heaven, your representations of it however glorious and exalted, will pass like the songs of melody, over an ear incapable of discerning the distinction of sounds.———

We see, even in the common intercourses of society,—how tedious it is to be in the company of a person whose humor is disagreeable to our own, though, perhaps, in all other respects, of the greatest worth and excellency.———How then can we imagine, that an ill-disposed soul, whose conversation never reached to heaven, but whose appetites and desires, to the last hour have grovelled upon this unclean spot of earth;—how can we imagine it should hereafter take pleasure in God, or be able to taste joy or satisfaction from his presence, who is so infinitely pure, that he even putteth no trust in his saints,——nor are the heavens themselves (as Job says) clean in his sight?—The consideration of this, has led some writers so far, as to say, with some degree of irreverence in the expression,—that it was not in the power of God to make a wicked man happy, if the soul was separated from the body, with all its vicious habits and inclinations unreformed;—which though, a very able divine in our church has pursued so far, as to declare his belief,—that could the happiest mansion in heaven be supposed to be allotted to a gross and polluted spirit, it would be so far from being happy in it, that it would do penance there to all eternity:—By which he meant, it would carry such appetites along with it, for which there could be found no

suitable objects. A sufficient cause for constant torment;——for those that it found there, would be so disproportioned, that they would rather vex and upbraid it, than satisfy its wants.——— This, it is true, is mere speculation,—and what concerns us not to know;—it being enough for our purpose, that such an experiment is never likely to be tried,—that we stand upon different terms with God,——that a virtuous life is the foundation of all our happiness,——that as God has no pleasure in wickedness, neither shall any evil dwell with him;——and that, if we expect our happiness to be in heaven, we must have our conversation in heaven, whilst upon earth,—make it the frequent subject of our thoughts and meditations,——let every step we take tend that way,——every action of our lives be conducted by that great mark of the prize of our high calling, forgetting those things which are behind;—forgetting this world,——disengaging our thoughts and affections from it, and thereby transforming them to the likeness of what we hope to be hereafter. How can we expect the inheritance of the saints of light, upon other terms than what they themselves obtained it?———

Can that body expect to rise and shine in glory that is a slave to lust, or dies in the fiery pursuit of an impure desire? Can that heart ever become the lightsome seat of peace and joy, that burns hot as an oven with anger, rage, envy, lust and strife, full of wicked imaginations, set only to devise and entertain evil?

Can that flesh appear in the last day, and inherit the kingdom of heaven in the glorified strength of perpetual youth, that is now clearly consumed in intemperance,—sinks in the surfeit of continual drunkenness and gluttony, and then tumbles into the grave, and almost pollutes the ground that is under it?——Can we reasonably

suppose, that head shall ever wear or become the crown of righteousness and peace, in which dwells nothing but craft, and avarice, deceit, and fraud, and treachery,—which is always plodding upon worldly designs,—racked with ambition,—rent asunder with discord,—ever delighting in mischief to others, and unjust advantages to itself?—Shall that tongue, which is the glory of a man when rightly directed—be ever set to God's heavenly praises, and warble forth the harmonies of the blessed, that is now full of cursing and bitterness, backbiting, and slander, under which is ungodliness and vanity, and the poison of asps?

Can it enter into our hearts even to hope, that those hands can ever receive the reward of righteousness, that are full of blood, laden with the wages of iniquity, of theft, rapine, violence, extortion, or other unlawful gain?—or that those feet shall ever be beautiful upon the mountains of light and joy, that were never shod for the preparation of the gospel,——that have run quite out of the way of God's word,———and made haste only to do evil?——No, surely.——In this sense,—he that is unjust, let him be unjust still,—and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still.

So inconsistent is the whole body of sin with the glories of the celestial body that shall be revealed hereafter,——that, in proportion as we fix the representation of these glories upon our minds, and in the more numerous particulars we do it,—the stronger the necessity as well as persuasion to deny ourselves all ungodliness and worldly lusts, to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, as the only way to entitle us to the blessedness spoken of in the Revelations———of those who did his commandments, and have a right to the tree of life, and shall enter into the gates of the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an

innumerable company of angels—to the general assembly and church of the first-born, that are written in heaven, and to GOD the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect —who have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

May GOD give us grace to live under the perpetual influence of this expectation,——that, by the habitual impression of these glories upon our imagination, and the frequent sending forth our thoughts and employing them on the other world, we may disentangle them from this,——and by so having our conversation in heaven whilst we are here, we may be thought fit inhabitants for it hereafter;——that when GOD, at the last day shall come with thousands and ten thousands of his saints, to judge the world, we may enter with them into happiness, and, with angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven, we may praise and magnify his glorious name, and enjoy his presence for ever. *Amen.*

SERMON XXX.

Description of the World.

2 PETER iii. 11.

Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved—what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness? looking and hastening unto the coming of God.

THE subject upon which St. Peter is discoursing in this chapter, is the certainty of Christ's coming to judge the world;—and the words of the text are the moral application he draws from the representation he gives of it,—in which, in answer to the cavils of the scoffers in the latter days, concerning the delay of his coming, he tells them, that God is not slack concerning his promises, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to us-ward;——*that the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat;—the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up.* ———Seeing then, says he, all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?—The inference is unavoidable, at least in theory, however it fails in practice;—how widely these two differ, I intend to make the subject of this discourse; and though it is a melancholy comparison, to consider, "what manner of persons we *really* "are," with "what manner of persons we *ought* "to be," yet, as the knowledge of the one, is at least one step towards improvement in the other, the parallel will not be thought to want its use.

Give me leave, therefore, in the first place, to recal to your observations, what kind of world it is we live in, and what manner of persons we really are.

Secondly, and in opposition to this, I shall make use of the apostle's argument, and, from a brief representation of the Christian religion, and the obligations it lays upon us, show, what manner of persons we *ought* to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for, and hastening unto the coming of the day of GOD.

Whoever takes a view of the world, will, I fear, be able to discern but very faint marks of this character, either upon the looks or actions of its inhabitants. Of all the ends and pursuits we are looking for, and hastening unto, this would be the least suspected; for, without running into that old declamatory cant upon the wickedness of the age, we may say, within the bounds of truth, that there is as little influence from this principle which the apostle lays stress on, and as little sense of religion, as small a share of virtue (at least as little of the appearance of it) as can be supposed to exist at all, in a country where it is countenanced by the state. The degeneracy of the times has been the common complaint of many ages:—How much we exceed our forefathers in this, is known alone to that GOD who trieth the heart. But this we may be allowed to urge in their favor,—They studied at least to preserve the appearance of virtue; public vice was branded with public infamy, and obliged to hide its head in privacy and retirement. The service of GOD was regularly attended, and religion not exposed to the reproaches of the scorner.

How the case stands with us at present, in each of these particulars, it is grievous to report,—and, perhaps, unacceptable to religion herself; yet, as this is a season wherein it is fit we should be told of our faults, let us for a moment impartially consider the articles of this charge.

And, first, concerning the great article of religion, and the influence it has at present upon the

lives and behavior of the present times;—concerning which I have said, that, if we are to trust appearances, there is as little as can well be supposed to exist at all in a Christian country.

Here I shall spare exclamations, and, avoiding all common-place railing upon the subject, confine myself to facts,—such as every one who looks out into the world, and makes any observations at all, will vouch for me.

Now, whatever are the degrees of real religion amongst us,—whatever they are, the appearances are strong against the charitable side of the question.

If religion is any where to be found, one would think it would be amongst those of the higher rank in life, whose education, and opportunities of knowing its great importance, should have brought them over to its interest, and rendered them as firm in the defence of it, as eminent in its example.——But, if you examine the fact, you will almost find it a test of a politer education, and a mark of more shining parts, to know nothing, and, indeed, care nothing at all about it:—Or, if the subject happens to engage the attention of a few of the more sprightly wits, that it serves no other purpose, but that of being made merry at, and of being reserved, as a standing jest, to enliven discourse, when conversation sickens upon their hands.

This is too sore an evil, not to be observed amongst persons of all ages, in what is called higher life; and so early does the contempt of this great concern begin to show itself——that it is no uncommon thing to hear persons disputing against religion, and raising cavals against the Bible, at an age when some of them would be hard set to read a chapter in it. And I may add, that, of those whose stock in knowledge is somewhat larger, that for the most part, it has scarce

any other foundation to rest on, but the sinking credit of traditional and second-hand objections against revelation, which, had they leisure to read, they would find answered and confuted a thousand times over.——But this by the way.——

If we take a view of the public worship of Almighty God, and observe in what manner it is reverenced by persons in this rank of life, whose duty it is to set an example to the poor and ignorant, we shall find concurring evidence upon this melancholy argument——of a general want of all outward demonstration of a sense of our duty towards God, as if religion was a business fit only to employ tradesmen and mechanics—and the salvation of our souls, a concern utterly below the consideration of a person of figure and consequence.——

I shall say nothing, at present, of the lower ranks of mankind:——Though they have not yet got into the fashion of laughing at religion, and treating it with scorn and contempt, and, I believe, are too serious a set of creatures ever to come into it;—yet, we are not to imagine, but that the contempt it is held in by those whose examples they are too apt to imitate, will, in time utterly shake their principles, and render them, if not as profane, at least as corrupt as their betters.———When this event happens——and we begin to *feel* the effects of it in our dealings with them,—those who have done the mischief, will find the necessity, at last, of turning religious in their own defence, and, for want of a better principle, to set an example of piety and good morals, for their own interest and convenience.

Thus much for the languishing state of religion in the present age;——in virtue and good morals, perhaps, the account may stand higher.—

Let us enquire.——

And here, I acknowledge, that an unexpe-

rienced man, who heard how loudly we all talked in behalf of virtue and moral honesty, and how unanimous we were all in our cry against vicious characters of all denominations, would be apt hastily to conclude, that the whole world was in an uproar about it——— and that there was so general an horror and detestation of vice amongst us, that mankind were all associating together to hunt it out of the world, and give it no quarter.——This, I own, would be a natural conclusion for any one, who only trusted his ears upon this subject. But, as matter of fact is allowed better evidence than hearsay,—let us see in the present, how the one case is contradicted by the other.——

However vehement we approve ourselves in discourse against vice,—I believe no one is ignorant, that the reception it actually meets with is very different:—The conduct and behavior of the world is so opposite to their language, and, all we hear, so contradicted by what we see, as to leave little room to question what sense we are to trust.——

Look, I beseech you, amongst those whose higher stations are made a shelter for the liberties they take, you will see, that no man's character is so infamous, nor any woman's so abandoned, as not to be visited and admitted freely into all companies, and, if the party can pay for it, even publicly to be courted, caressed, and flattered. If this will not overthrow the credit of our virtue,—take a short view of the general decay of it, from the fashionable excesses of the age,——in favor of which, there seems to be formed so strong a party, that a man of sobriety, temperance, and regularity, scarce knows how to accommodate himself to the society he lives in,———and is oft as much at a loss how and where to dispose of himself;——and, unless you suppose a mixture of constancy in his temper, it

is great odds but such a one would be ridiculed, and laughed out of his scruples and his virtue at the same time.——To say nothing of occasional rioting, chambering, and wantonness,—consider how many public markets are established, merely for the sale of virtue,—where the manner of going, too sadly indicates the intention;——and the disguise each is under, not only gives power safely to drive on the bargain, but too often tempts to carry it into execution too.——

This sinning under disguise, I own, seems to carry some appearance of a secret homage to virtue and decorum, and might be acknowledged as such, was it not the only public instance the world seems to give of it.—In other cases, a just sense of shame seems a matter of so little concern, that, instead of any regularity of behavior, you see thousands who are tired with the very form of it, and who at length have even thrown the mask of it aside, as an useless piece of incumbrance.—This, I believe, will need no evidence;——it is too evidently seen in the open liberties taken every day, in defiance (not to say of religion, but of) decency and common good manners;—so that it is no uncommon thing to behold vices, which, heretofore, were committed only in dark corners, now openly show their faces in broad day, and oft-times with such an air of triumph, as if the party thought he was doing himself honor, —or, that he thought the deluding an unhappy creature, and the keeping her in a state of guilt, was as necessary a piece of grandeur as the keeping an equipage,—and did him as much credit as any other appendage of his fortune.——

If we pass on from the vices to the indecorums of the age (which is a softer name for vices), you will scarce see any thing, in what is called higher life, but what bespeaks a general relaxation of all order and discipline,—in which our opinions, as

well as manners, seem to be set loose from all restraints,—and in truth, from all serious reflections too;——and one may venture to say, that gaming and extravagance, to the utter ruin of the greatest estates,——minds dissipated with diversions, and heads giddy with a perpetual rotation of them, are the most general characters to be met with;—and, though one would expect, that, at least, the more solemn seasons of the year set apart for the contemplation of Christ's sufferings, should give some check and interruption to them; yet, what appearance is there ever amongst us, that it is so?—What one alteration does it make in the course of things?—Is not the doctrine of mortification insulted by the same luxury of entertainments at our tables?—Is not the same order of diversions perpetually returning and scarce any thing else thought of?—Does not the same levity in dress, as well as discourse, show itself in persons of all ages?—I say of all ages,—for, it is no small aggravation of the corruption of our morals, that age, which, by its authority, was once able to frown youth into sobriety and better manners, and keep them within bounds, seems but too often to lead the way,———and, by their unseasonable example, give a countenance to follies and weakness, which youth is but too apt to run into, without such a recommendation. Surely, age, which is but one remove from death, should have nothing about it, but what looks like a decent preparation for it. In purer times, it was the case;—but now, grey hairs themselves scarce ever appear, but in the high mode and flaunting garb of youth, with heads as full of pleasure, and clothes as ridiculously, and as much in the fashion, as the person who wears them is usually grown out of it.—— Upon which article, give me leave to make a short reflection;—which is this,—That when-

ever the eldest equal the youngest in the vanity of their dress, there is no reason to be given for it but that they equal them, if not surpass them, in the vanity of their desires.

But this by the bye——

Though, in truth, the observation falls in with the main intention of this discourse, which is not framed to flatter our follies, or touch them with a light hand, but plainly to point them out;—— that by recalling to your mind, what manner of persons we really are, I might better lead you to the apostle's inference, of what manner of persons ye ought to be, in all holy conversation and godliness;—looking for, and hastening unto the coming of the day of God.

The apostle, in the concluding verse of this argument, exhorts, that they who look for such things, be diligent, that they be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless;—and one may conclude with him, that if the hopes or fears,—either the reason or the passions of men, are to be wrought upon at all, it must be from the force and influence of this awakening consideration in the text,—"that all these things shall be dissolved;"—that this vain and perishable scene must change;—that we who now tread the stage, must shortly be summoned away;—that we are creatures but of a day, hastening unto the place from whence we shall return no more;—that whilst we are here, our conduct and behavior is minutely observed; that there is a Being about our paths, and about our beds, whose omniscient eye 'spies out all our ways, and takes a faithful record of all the passages of our lives;—that these volumes shall be produced and opened, and men shall be judged out of the things that are written in them; ——that without respect of persons, we shall be made accountable for our thoughts, or words and actions, to this greatest and best of Beings,

before whose judgment-seat we must finally appear, and receive the things done in the body, whether they are good, or whether they are bad.

That, to add to the terror of it,——this day of the LORD will come upon us like a thief in the night——of that hour no one knoweth;——that we are not sure of its being suspended one day, or one hour;——or, what is the same case,—that we are standing upon the edge of a precipice, with nothing but the single thread of human life to hold us up;—and that if we fall unprepared in this thoughtless state, we are lost, and must perish for evermore.

What manner of person we ought to be, upon these principles of our religion, St. Peter has told us, in all holy conversation and godliness;—and I shall only remind, how different a frame of mind, the looking for, and hastening unto the coming of GOD, under such a life, is, from that of spending our days in vanity, and our years in pleasure.

Give me leave, therefore, to conclude in that merciful warning, which our SAVIOUR, the Judge himself, hath given us, at the close of the same exhortation:——

Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and the cares of this life;——and so that day come upon you unawares;——for as a snare shall it come upon all that dwell on the face of the whole earth——Watch, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man. Which may GOD of his mercy grant, through JESUS CHRIST. *Amen.*

SERMON XXXI.

St. Peter's Character.

ACTS, iii. 12.

And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or, why look ye so earnestly on us, as though, by our own power or holiness, we had made this man to walk?

THESE words, as the text tells us, were spoke by St. Peter, on the occasion of his miraculous cure of the lame man, who was laid at the gate of the temple, and, in the beginning of this chapter, had asked an alms of St. Peter and St. John, as they went up together at the hour of prayer; on whom St. Peter fastening his eyes, as in the 4th verse, and declaring he had no such relief to give him as he expected, having neither silver nor gold,—but that such as he had, the benefit of that divine power which he had received from his Master, he would impart to him,—he commands him forthwith, in the name of *Jesus Christ* of Nazareth, to rise up and walk: And he took him by the hand, and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ancle bones received strength; and he leaped up, stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, leaping and praising God.

It seems he had been born lame, had passed a whole life of despair, without hopes of ever being restored; so that the immediate sense of strength and activity communicated to him at once, in so surprizing and unsought-for a manner, cast him into the transport of mind so natural to a man so benefitted beyond his expectation. So that the amazing instance of a supernatural power,—the notoriety of fact, wrought at the hour of prayer,—the unexceptionableness of the object, that it was no imposture, for they knew that it

was he which sat for alms at the beautiful gate of the temple,—the unfeigned expressions of an enraptured heart almost beside itself, confirming the whole;——the man that was healed, in the 10th verse, holding his benefactor, Peter and John, entering into the temple with them, walking, and leaping, and praising GOD;——the great concourse of people, drawn together by this event in the 11th verse, for they all ran unto them, into the porch that was called Solomon's, greatly wondering: Sure never was such a fair opportunity for an ambitious mind to have established a character of superior goodness and power. To a man set upon this world, who sought his own praise and honor, what an invitation would it have been, to have turned these circumstances to such a purpose?——to have fallen in with the passions of an astonished and grateful city, prepossessed, from what had happened, so strongly in his favor already, that little art or management was requisite to have improved their wonder and good opinions, into the highest reverence of his sanctity, awe of his person, or whatever other belief should be necessary to feed his pride, or serve secret ends of glory and interest?—A mind not sufficiently mortified to the world, might have been tempted here to have taken the honor due to GOD, and transferred it to himself.—He might——not so a disciple of Christ: For, when Peter saw it,—when he saw the propensity in them to be misled on this occasion, he answered and said unto the people, in the words of the text,—Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look you so earnestly on us, as though, by our own power and holiness, we had made this man to walk?—the GOD of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the GOD of our fathers, hath glorified his son JESUS.

O holy, and blessed apostle!

How would thy meek and mortified spirit satisfy itself in uttering so humble and so just a declaration?——What an honest triumph wouldst thou taste the sweets of, in thus conquering thy passion of vain-glory, keeping down thy pride,—disclaiming the praises which should have fed it, by telling the wondering spectators, It was not thy own power, it was not thy own holiness, which had wrought this, thou being of like passions and infirmities; but that it was the power of the God of Abraham, the holiness of thy dear Lord, whom they crucified, operating by faith through thee, who wast but an instrument in his hands? If thus honestly declining honor, which the occasion so amply invited thee to take;—if this would give more satisfaction to a mind like thine, than the loudest praises of a mistaken people,—what true rapture would be added to it, from the reflection, that, in this instance of self-denial, thou hast not only done well, but, what was a still more endearing thought, that thou hadst been able to copy the example of thy divine Master, who, in no action of his life, sought ever his own praise, but, on the contrary, declined all possible occasions of it?—and in the only public instance of honor which he suffered to be given him in his entrance into Jerusalem,—thou didst remember,—it was accepted with such a mixture of humility, that the prediction of the prophet was not more exactly fulfilled in the hosannas of the multitude, than in the meekness wherewith he received them, lowly, and sitting upon an ass. How could a disciple fail of profitting by the example of so humble a master, whose whole course of life was a particular lecture to this virtue, and, in every instance of it, showed plainly, he came not to share the pride and glories of life, or gratify the carnal expectation of ambitious followers, which, had he af-

fected external pomp, he might have acomplished, by engrossing, as he could have done by a word, all the riches of the world, and, by the splendor of his court, and dignity of his person, had been greater than Solomon in all his glory, and have attracted the applause and admiration of the world? This, every disciple knew was in his power.—So that the meanness of his birth, the toils and poverty of his life, the low offices in which he was engaged by preaching the gospel to the poor, the numberless dangers and inconveniences attending the execution, were all voluntary.—This humble choice, both of friends and family, out of the meanest of the people amongst whom he appeared rather as a servant than a master, coming not (as he often told them) to be ministered unto, but to minister,—and, as the prophet had foretold in that mournful description of him, having no form nor comeliness, nor any beauty that we should desire him.——

How could a disciple, you will say, reflect with out benefit on this amiable character, with all the other tender pathetic proofs of humility, which his memory would suggest had happened of a piece with it, in the course of his Master's life; but particularly at the conclusion and great catastrophe of it,—at his crucifixion; the impressions of which could never be forgotten?——When a life full of so many engaging instances of humility, was crowned with the most endearing one of humbling himself to the death of the cross,—the death of a slave and a malefactor,—suffering himself to be led like a lamb to the slaughter,—dragged to Calvary without opposition or complaint, and, as a sheep before his shearer is dumb, opening not his mouth.——

O blessed Jesus! well might a disciple of thine learn of thee to be meek and lowly of heart, as

thou exhortedst them all, for thou wast meek and lowly: Well might they profit, when such a lesson was seconded by such an example!—It is not to be doubted what force this must have had on the actions of those who were attendants and constant followers of our SAVIOUR on earth;—saw the meekness of his temper in the occurrences of his life, and the amazing proof of it at his death, who, though he was able to call down legions of angels to his rescue, or by a single act of omnipotence to have destroyed his enemies; yet suppressed his almighty power, neither resented, or revenged the indignity done him, but patiently suffered himself to be numbered with the transgressors.

It could not well be otherwise, but that every eye-witness of this must have been wrought upon, in some degree, as the apostle, to let the same mind be in him which also was in Christ Jesus. Nor will it be disputed how much of the honor of St. Peter's behavior, in the present transaction, might be owing to the impressions he received, on that memorable occasion of his Lord's death, sinking still deeper, from the affecting remembrance of the many instances his master had given of this engaging virtue in the course of his life.

St. Peter certainly was of a warm and sensible nature, as we may collect from the sacred writings,—a temper fittest to receive all the advantages which such impressions could give; and therefore, as it is a day and place sacred to this great apostle, it may not be unacceptable, if I engage the remainder of your time, in a short essay upon his character, principally as it relates to this particular disposition of heart, which is the subject of the discourse.

This great apostle was a man of distinction amongst the disciples, and was one of such virtues and qualifications, as seemed to have recom-

mended him more than the advantage of his years or knowledge.

On his first admission to our SAVIOUR's acquaintance, he gave a most evident testimony that he was a man of real and tender goodness, when, being awakened by the miraculous draught of the fishes, as we read in the fifth of St. Luke, and knowing the author must necessarily be from God, he fell down instantly at his feet,—broke out into this humble and pious reflection,—Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord! The censure, you will say, expresses him a sinful man; but so to censure himself, with such unaffected modesty, implies, more effectually than any thing else could, that he was not, in the common sense of the word, a sinful, but a good man, who, like the publican in the temple, was no less justified, for a self-accusation extorted merely from the humility of a devout heart, jealous of its own imperfections. And though the words, *depart from me*, carry in them the face of fear, yet he who heard them, and knew the heart of the speaker, found they carried in them a greater measure of desire. For Peter was not willing to be discharged from his new guest, but, fearing his unfitness to accompany him, longed to be made more worthy of his conversation. A meek and modest distrust of himself, seemed to have had no small share at that time, in his natural temper and complexion; and though it would be greatly improved, and, no doubt, much better principled, by the advantages on which I enlarged above, in his commerce and observation with his Lord and Master, yet it appears to have been an early and distinguishing part of his character. An instance of this, though little in itself, and omitted by the other evangelists, is preserved by St. John, in his account of our Saviour's girding himself with a napkin, and washing the disciples feet; to which

office, not one of them is represented as making any opposition: But when he came to Simon Peter,—the evangelist tells,—Peter said to him, Dost *Thou* wash my feet? Jesus said unto him, What I do, thou knowest not now, but shalt know hereafter. Peter said to him, Thou shalt never wash my feet.—Humility for a moment triumphed over his submission, and he expostulates with him upon it, with all the earnest and tender opposition which was natural to a humble heart, confounded with shame, that his Lord and Master should insist to do so mean and painful an act of servitude to him.

I would sooner form a judgment of a man's temper, from his behavior on such like occurrences of life as these, than from the more weighed and important actions, where a man is more upon his guard,—has more preparation to disguise the true disposition of his heart, and more temptation, when disguised to impose it on others.

This management was no part of Peter's character, who, with all the real and unaffected humility which he showed, was possessed of such a quick sensibility and promptness of nature, which utterly unfitted him for art and premeditation; though this particular cast of temper had its disadvantages, at the same time, as it led him to an unreserved discovery of the opinions and prejudices of his heart, which he was wont to declare, and sometimes in so open and ungarded a manner, as exposed him to the sharpness of a rebuke where he could least bear it.

I take notice of this, because it will help us in some measure to reconcile a seeming contradiction in his character, which will naturally occur here, from considering that great and capital failing of his life, when, by a presumptuous declaration of his own fortitude, he fell into the disgrace

of denying his Lord; in both of which, he acted so opposite to the character here given, that you will ask, How could so humble a man as you describe, ever have been guilty of so self-sufficient and unguarded a vaunt, as that, though he should die with his Master,——yet would he not deny him?———Or whence,——that so sincere and honest a man was not better able to perform it!——

The case was this———

Our Lord, before he was betrayed, had taken occasion to admonish his disciples of the peril of lapsing;——telling them, 31st verse,———All ye shall be offended because of me this night.—To which Peter answering, with a zeal mixed with too much confidence,—That though all shall be offended, yet will I *never be offended:*—To check this trust in himself,—our Saviour replies, that he in particular should deny him *thrice.*—But Peter, looking upon this monition no farther than as it implied a reproach to his faith, and his love, and his courage;——stung to the heart to have them called in question by his Lord,—he hastily summons them all up to form his final resolution,—Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee.—The resolve was noble and dutiful to the last degree,—and, I make no doubt, as honest a one——that is, both as just in the matter, and as sincere in the intention, as ever was made by any of mankind;—his character not suffering us to imagine he made it in a braving dissimulation:——No——for he proved himself sufficiently in earnest by his subsequent behavior in the garden, when he drew his sword against a whole band of men, and thereby made it appear, that he had less concern for his own life than he had for his Master's safety.——How then came his resolution to miscarry?—The reason seems purely this:——Peter

grounded the execution of it upon too much confidence in himself,—doubted not but his will was in his power, whether God's grace assisted him or not:—Surely thinking, that what he had courage to resolve so honestly, he had likewise ability to perform.——This was his mistake;—and, though it was a very great one,—yet it was in some degree akin to a vritue,—as it sprung merely from a consciousness of his integrity and truth, and too adventurous a conclusion of what they would enable him to perform, on the sharpest encounters, for his Master's sake:——So that his failing in this point, was but a consequence of this hasty and ill-considered resolve;—and his Lord, to rebuke and punish him for it, did no other than leave him to his own strength to perform it;—which, in effect, was almost the same as leaving him to the necessity of not performing it at all.——The great apostle had not considered, that he who precautioned him was the searcher of hearts,—and needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man:—He did not remember, that his Lord had said before,——Without me ye can do nothing;—that the exertions of all our faculties, were under the power of his will:—He had forgot the knowledge of this needful truth, on this one unhappy juncture,—where he had so great a temptation to the contrary, though he was full of the persuasion in every other transaction of his life,—but most visibly here in the text,—where he breaks forth in the warm language of a heart still overflowing with remembrance of this very mistake he had once committed;—Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this,—as though, by our own power or holiness, we had wrought this?——The God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob,—the God of our fathers, through faith in his name, hath made this man whole, whom ye seek and know.——

This is the best answer I am able to make to this objection against the uniformity of the apostle's character which I have given;—upon which let it be added,—that, was no such apology capable of being made in its behalf,—that the truth and regularity of a character, is not, in justice, to be looked upon as broken, from any one single act or omission which may seem a contradiction to it:—The best of men appear sometimes to be strange compounds of contradictory qualities: And, were the accidental oversights and folly of the wisest man,—the failings and imperfections of a religious man,—the hasty acts and passionate words of a meek man;—were they to rise up in judgment against them,——and an ill-natured judge be suffered to mark in this manner what has been done amiss,—what character so unexceptionable as to be able to stand before him?—So that, with the candid allowances which the infirmities of a man may claim, when he falls through surprize, more than a premeditation,—one may venture, upon the whole, to sum up Peter's character in a few words,—He was a man sensible in his nature,——of quick passions, tempered with the greatest humility and most unaffected poverty of spirit that ever met in such a character.—So that, in the only criminal instance of his life which I have spoken to, you are at a loss which to admire most;—the tenderness and sensibility of his soul, it being wrought upon to repentance by a look from JESUS;—or the uncommon humility of it, which he testified thereupon, in the bitterness of his sorrow for what he had done.—He was once presumptuous in trusting to his own strength:—His general and true character was that of the most engaging meekness,—distrustful of himself and his abilities to the last degree.—

He denied his master;—but, in all instances of his life but that, was a man of the greatest truth

and sincerity;—to which part of his character our Saviour has given an undeniable testimony, in conferring on him the symbolical name of Cephas, a rock, a name the most expressive of constancy and firmness.——

He was a man of great love to his Master,—and of no less zeal to his religion; of which, from among many, I shall take one instance out of St. John, with which I shall conclude this account:—Where, upon the desertion of several other disciples,—our Saviour puts the question to the twelve,——Will ye also go away?—Then, says the text, Peter answered and said,—Lord! whither shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life,——and we believe, and know, that thou art Christ the Son of God.————Now, if we look into the gospel, we find what our Saviour pronounced on this very confession.

Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee,——but my Father which is in heaven.—That our Saviour had the words of eternal life,—Peter was able to deduce from principles of natural reason; because reason was able to judge, from the internal marks of his doctrine, that it was worthy God, and accommodated properly to advance human nature and human happiness.—But for all this,——reason could not infallibly determine that the messenger of this doctrine was the Messias, the eternal Son of the living God:—To know this, required an illumination;—and this illumination, I say, seems to have been vouchsafed at that instant as a reward,——as would have been sufficient evidence by itself of the disposition of his heart.

I have now finished this short essay upon the character of St. Peter, not with a loud panegyric upon the power of his keys, or a ranting encomium upon some monastic qualifications, with which a popish pulpit would ring upon such an

occasion, without doing much honor to the saint, or good to the audience,—but have drawn it with truth and sobriety, representing it as it was, as consisting of virtues the most worthy of imitation,——and grounded, not upon apocryphal accounts and legendary inventions, the wardrobe from whence popery dresses out her saints on these days,—but upon matters of fact in the sacred scriptures, in which all Christians agree.—And since I have mentioned *popery*, I cannot better conclude, than by observing, how ill the spirit and character of that church resembles that particular part of St. Peter's, which has been made the subject of this discourse:—Would one think that a church, which thrusts itself under this apostle's patronage, and claims her power under him, would presume to exceed the degrees of it which he acknowledged to possess himself? —But how ill are your expectations answered, when, instead of the humble declaration in the text,—Ye men of Israel, marvel not at us, as if our own power and holiness had wrought this;—you hear a language and behavior from the Romish court, as opposite to it as insolent words and actions can frame.

So that, instead of, Ye men of Israel, marvel not at us,—ye men of Israel, *do* marvel at us,—hold us in admiration:—Approach our sacred pontiff,—(who is not only holy—but holiness itself;)—approach his person with reverence, and deem it the greatest honor and happiness of your lives, to fall down before his chair, and be admitted to kiss his feet.——

Think not, as if it were not our own holiness which merits all the homage you can pay us. ——It is our own holiness,—the superabundance of it, of which, having more than we know what to do with ourselves,——from works of supererogation, we have transferred the surplus

in ecclesiastic warehouses, and, in pure zeal for the good of your souls, have established public banks of merit, ready to be drawn upon at all times.

Think not, ye men of Israel, or say within yourselves, that we are unprofitable servants,—we have no good works to spare, or that, if we had ——we cannot make this use of them;—that we have no power to circulate our indulgencies,—and huckster them out, as we do, through all the parts of Christendom.——Know ye, by these presents, that it is our own power which does this;—the plenitude of our apostolic power operating with our own holiness, that enables us to bind and loose as seems meet to us on earth;—to save your souls, or deliver them up to Satan, and, as they please or displease, to indulge whole kingdoms at once, or excommunicate them all;—binding kings in chains, and your nobles in links of iron.——

That we may never again feel the effects of such language and principles,—may GOD of his mercy grant us. *Amen.*

SERMON XXXII.

Thirtieth of January.

EZRA ix. 6, 7.

And I said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God:—For our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up into the heavens. Since the days of our fathers have we been in a great trespass unto this day.

THERE is not, I believe, throughout all history, an instance of so strange and obstinately corrupt a people, as the Jews, of whom Ezra complains;—for though, on one hand,——there never was a people that received so many testimonies of GOD's favor to encourage them to be good,—so, on the other hand, there was never a people which so often felt the scourge of their iniquities, to dishearten them from doing evil.

And yet, neither the one nor the other seemed ever able to make them either the wiser or better;—neither GOD's blessings, nor his corrections, could ever soften them;—they still continued a thankless, unthinking people,—who profited by no lessons,—neither were to be won with mercies nor terrified with punishments—but, on every succeeding trial and occasion, extremely disposed against God, to go astray and act wickedly.

In the words of the text, the prophet's heart overflows with sorrow, upon his reflection of this unworthy part of their character;——and the manner of his application to God, is so expressive of his humble sense of it,—and there is something in the words so full of tenderness and shame for them upon that score,—as bespeaks the most paternal as well as pastoral concern for them.—And he said, O my God, I am ashamed,—and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God.—No

doubt, the holy man was confounded to look back upon that long series of so many of God's undeserved mercies to them, of which they had made so bad and ungrateful a use :—He considered, that they had all the motives that could lay restraints, either upon a considerate or a reasonable people ;—that God had not only created, upheld, and favored them with all advantages in common with the rest of their fellow-creatures —but had been particularly kind to them ;—that when they were in the house of bondage, in the most hopeless condition,—he had heard their cry, and took compassion on their afflictions, and, by a chain of great and mighty deliverances, had set them free from the yoke of oppression.—The prophet, no doubt, reflected at the same time, that besides this instance of God's goodness, in first favoring their miraculous escape,—a series of successes, not to be accounted for from second causes, and the natural course of events, had crowned their heads in so remarkable a manner, as to afford an evident proof, not only of God's general concern, but of his particular providence and attachment to them above all people.—In the wilderness he led them like sheep, and kept them as the apple of his eye ;—he suffered no man to do them wrong,—but reproved even kings for their sake ; that when they entered into the promised land, no force was able to stand before them ;—when in possession,—no army was ever able to drive them out ;—that nations, greater and mightier than they, were thrust forth from before them ;—that in a word, all nature for a time, was driven backwards by the hands of God, to serve them,—and that even the sun itself had stood still in the midst of heaven to secure their victories ;—that when all these mercies were cast away upon them, and no principle of gratitude or interest could make them an obedient people,—God

had tried by misfortunes to bring them back;—that when instructions, warnings, invitations, miracles, prophets, and holy guides, had no effect,—he at last suffered them to reap the wages of their folly, by letting them fall again into the same state of bondage in Babylon, from whence he had first raised them.—Here it is that Ezra pours out his confession.—It was no small aggravation to Ezra's concern, to find, that even this last trial had no good effect upon their conduct;—that all the alternatives of promises and threats, comforts and afflictions,—instead of making them grow the better, made them apparently grow the worse:—How could he intercede for them, but with shame and sorrow?—and say, as in the text, O my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee,—for our iniquities are increased over our heads, and our trespass is grown up into the heavens;—since the days of our fathers have we been in a great trespass unto this day.—

Thus much for the prophet's humble confession to God for the Jews, for which he had but too just a foundation given by them;—and I know not how I can make a better use of the words, as the occasion of the day led me to the choice of them,—than by a serious application of the same sad confession with regard to ourselves.———

Our fathers, like those of the Jews in Ezra's time, no doubt, have done amiss, and greatly provoked God by their violence;—but if our own iniquities, like theirs, are increased over our heads;—if, since the days of our fathers, we have been in great trespass ourselves unto this day,—it is fit this day we should be put in mind of it;—nor can the time and occasion be better employed, than in hearing with patience the reproofs which such a parallel will lead me to give.——

It must be acknowledged, there is no nation which had ever so many extraordinary reasons and

supernatural motives to become thankful and virtuous, as the Jews had;—yet, at the same time, there is no one which has not sufficient;—and, setting aside at present the consideration of a future state as a reward for being so,—there is no nation under heaven, which, besides the daily blessings of God's providence to them, but have received sufficient blessings and mercies at the hands of God, to engage their best services, and the warmest returns of gratitude they can pay,—There has been a time, may be, when they have been delivered from some grievous calamity,—from the rage of pestilence or famine,—from the edge and fury of the sword,—from the fate and fall of kingdoms round them:—They may have been preserved, by providential discoveries, from plots and designs against the well-being of their states,—or by critical turns and revolutions in their favor when beginning to sink:—By some signal interposition of GOD's providence,—they may have rescued their liberties and all that was dear to them, from the jaws of some tyrant;—or may have preserved their religion pure and uncorrupted, when all other comforts failed them.——

If other countries have reason to be thankful to GOD for any one of these mercies, much more has *this* of ours, which at one time or other hath received them all;—insomuch, that our history, for this last century, has scarce been any thing else but the history of our deliverances, and GOD's blessings,—and these in so complicated a chain, and with so little interruption,——as to be scarce ever vouchsafed to any nation or language besides,—except the Jews;—and, with regard to them, though inferior in the stupenduous manner of their working,—yet no way so in the extensive goodness of their effects, and the infinite benevolence which must have wrought them for us.—Here then let us stop, and look back a moment,

l inquire, as in the case of the Jews, what great
ects all this has had upon our lives,—and how
worthy we have lived—of what we have re-
ived?——

A stranger,—when he heard—that this island
d been so favored by heaven,—so happy in
r laws and religion,—so flourishing in our trade
so blessed in our situation and natural product,
and in all of them so often—so visibly pro-
ted by Providence,—would conclude, our grati-
le and morals had kept pace with our blessings;
and he would say,—as we are the most bles-
l and favored, that we must be the most
tuous and religious people upon the face of the
rth.

Would to God! there was no other reason to
cline one to so charitable a belief:—For, without
nning into any common-place declamation up-
the wickedness of the age,—we may say, with-
the bounds of truth,—that we have profited in
s respect as little as it was possible for the Jews;
that there is as little virtue,——and as little
se of religion, at least as little of the appear-
ce of it, as can be supposed to exist at all, in
country where it is countenanced by the state.

Our forefathers, whatever greater degrees of
l virtue they were possessed of,—God, who
archeth the heart,—best knows;—but this is
rtain,—in their days, they had at least the form
godliness,—and paid this compliment to reli-
on, as to wear, at least, the appearance and out-
ard garb of it.—The public service of God was
tter frequented,—and in a devout, as well as
gular manner;—there was no open profaneness
our streets, to put piety to the blush,—or do-
stic ridicule, to make her uneasy, and force
r to withdraw.——

Religion, though treated with freedom, was
ll treated with respect;—the youth of both

sexes kept under greater restraint;—good order and good hours were then kept up in most families; and, in a word, a greater strictness and sobriety of manners maintained throughout, amongst people of all ranks and conditions;—so that vice, however secretly it might be practised, ——was ashamed to be seen.——

But all this has insensibly been borne down, ever since the days of our forefathers trespass;—when, to avoid one extreme, we began to run into another;——so that, instead of any great religion amongst us, you see thousands who are tired even of the form of it, and who have at length thrown the mask of it aside,—as an useless incumbrance.——

But this licentiousness, he would say, may be chiefly owing to a long course of prosperity, which is apt to corrupt men's minds—God has, since this, tried you with afflictions;—you have been visited with a long and expensive war:—God has sent, moreover, a pestilence amongst your cattle, which has cut off the flock from the fold,—and left no heard in the stalls.—Surely, he will say,—two such terrible scourges must have awakened the consciences of the most unthinking part of you, and forced the inhabitants of your land—from such abominations—though they failed with the Jews, to have learned righteousness for themselves.——

I own this is the natural effect—and, one would hope, should always be the natural use and improvement, from such calamities;—for we often find, that numbers, who, in prosperity, seem to forget God, do yet remember him in the day of trouble and distress.—Yet, consider this nationally—we see no such effect from it in fact, as one would be led to expect from the speculation.—For instance, with all the devastation, bloodshed and expense which the war has occasioned,

—how many converts has it made to frugality,—to virtue, or even to seriousness itself?—The pestilence amongst our cattle,—though it has distressed and utterly undone so many thousands, yet what one visible alteration has it made in the course of our lives?——

And though one would imagine, that the necessary drains of taxes for the one,—and the loss of rents and property from the other, should, in some measure, have withdrawn the means of gratifying our passions, as we have done:—Yet what appearance is there amongst us that it is so?—

What one fashionable folly or extravagance has been checked by it?—Is not there the same luxury and epicurism of entertainments at our tables?—do we not pursue with eagerness the same giddy round of trifling diversions?—is not the infection diffused amongst people of all ranks, and all ages?—And even grey hairs, whose sober example and manners ought to check the extravagant sallies of the thoughtless, gay, and unexperienced,—too often totter under the same costly ornaments, and join the general riot. Where vanity, like this, governs the heart, even charity will allow us to suppose, that a consciousness of their inability to pursue greater excesses, is the only vexation of spirit.—In truth, the observation falls in with the main intention of the discourse,—which is not framed to flatter your follies, but plainly to point them out,—and show you the general corruption of manners, and want of religion,—which all men see,—and which the wise and good so much lament.——

But the inquirer will naturally go on, and say, that though this representation does not answer his expectations, that undoubtedly we must have profited by these lessons in other respects;—that though we have not approved our understanding in the sight of God, by a virtuous use of our mi-

fortunes, to true wisdom,—that we must have improved them, however, to political wisdom:—So that he would say,—though the English do not appear to be a religious people,—they are at least a loyal one:—They have so often felt the scourge of rebellion, and have tasted so much sharp fruit from it,—as to have set their teeth on edge for ever.—But, good GOD! how would he be astonished to find,—that though we have been so often tossed to and fro by our own tempestuous humors,—that we were not yet sick of the storm!—that though we solemnly, on every return of this day, lament the guilt of our forefathers, in staining their hands in blood,—we never once think of our principles and practices, which tend the same way!—and though the providence of GOD has set bounds, that they do not work as much mischief as in days of distruction and desolation,—little reason have we to ascribe the merit thereof to our own wisdom:—So that, when the whole account is stated betwixt us,—there seems nothing to prevent the application of the words in the text,—That our iniquities are increased over our heads, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens.—Since the days of our fathers, have we been in a great trespass unto this day;——and though it is fit and becoming that we weep for them,—it is much more so, that we weep for ourselves,—that we lament our own corruptions,——and the little advantages we have made of the mercies or chastisements of GOD,——or from the sins and provocations of our forefathers.——

This is the fruit we are to gather, in a day of such humiliation;——and unless it produces that for us, by a reformation of our manners, and by turning us from the error of our ways,——the service of this day is more a senseless insult upon the memories of our ancestors,—than an honest design to profit by their mistakes and misfortunes,

·and to become wiser and better from our reflec-
)ns upon them.——
Till this is done, it avails little, though we pray
rvently to God not to lay their sins to our charge,
.whilst we have so many remaining of our own.
....Unless we are touched for ourselves, how can
e expect he should hear our cry? It is the wick-
l corruption of a people which they are to thank,
r whatever natural calamities they feel :....This
the very state we are in,.....which, by disen-
ıging Providence from ·taking our part,.....will
ways leave a people exposed to the whole force
accidents, both from within and without :....And
)wever statesmen may dispute about the causes
the growth or decay of kingdoms,.....it is, for
ıis cause, a matter of eternal truth,....that as vir-
ıe and religion are our only recommendation to
od,.....that they are, consequently, the only true
ısis of our happiness and prosperity on earth ;....,
ıd, however, we may shelter ourselves under
istinction of party,.....that a wicked man is the
orst enemy the state has ;.....and, for the contra-
r, it will always be found, that a virtuous man is
ıe best patriot, and the best subject the king has.
..And though an individual may say, What will
ıy righteousness profit a nation of men ?.....I an-
wer,.....If it fail of a blessing here, (which is not
kely), it will have one advantage,.....it will save
ıy own soul, and give thee that peace at the last,
hich this world cannot take away.——
Which God, of his infinite mercy grant us all.
men.

SERMON XXXIII.

ROMANS, ii. 4.

Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and bearance, and long-suffering,—not knowing that goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

So says St. Paul, And,

ECCLES. viii. 11.

Because sentence against an evil work is not exec speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of me fully set in them to do evil.

TAKE either as you like it, you will get thing by the bargain.——

It is a terrible character of the world, wh Solomon is here accounting for,—that their he are fully set in them to do evil.—And the ge ral outcry against the wickedness of the age, every age, from Solomon's down to this, sho but too lamentably, what grounds have all al been given for the complaint.——

The disorder and confusion arising in the aff of the world from the wickedness of it, be ever such,—so evidently seen,—so severely as naturally to induce every one who was a sp tator or sufferer, to give the melancholy pre ence to the times he lived in; as if the corru ons of men's manners had not only exceeded reports of former days, but the power almos rising above the pitch to which the wickednes the age was arrived. How far they may h been deceived in such calculations, I shall not quire;—let it suffice, that mankind have ever b bad,—considering what motives they have ha the better;—and, taking this for granted, inst of declaiming against it, let us see whether a course may not be as serviceable, by endea

ing, as Solomon has here done, rather to give an account of it, and, by tracing back the evils to their first principles, to direct ourselves to the true remedy against them.——

Let it here only be premised,—that the wickedness, either of the present or past times, whatever scandal and reproach it brings upon Christians,—ought not, in reason, to reflect dishonor upon Christianity, which is so apparently well framed to make us good,—that there is not a greater paradox in nature,—than that so good a religion should be no better recommended by its professors.—Though this may seem a paradox,—it is still, I say, no objection, though it has often been made use of against Christianity;—since, if the morals of men are not reformed, it is not owing to a defect in the revelation, but it is owing to the same causes which defeated all the use and intent of reason,—before revelation was given.—For, setting aside the obligations which a divine law lays upon us,—whoever considers the state and condition of human nature, and, upon this view, how much stronger the natural motives are to virtue than to vice, would expect to find the world much better than it is, or ever has been.—For, who would suppose the generality of mankind to betray so much folly, as to act against the common interest of their own kind, as every man does who yields to the temptation of what is wrong?—But, on the other side,—if men first look into the practice of the world, and there observe the strange prevalency of vice, and how willing men are to defend, as well as to commit it,—one would think they believed, that all discourses of virtue and honesty, were mere matter of speculation, for men to entertain some idle hours with; and say truly, that men seemed universally to be agreed in nothing but in speaking well and doing ill.—But this casts no more dishonor upon rea-

son, than it does upon revelation;—the truth of the case being this, that no motives have been great enough to restrain those from sin, who have secretly loved it, and only sought pretences for the practice of it.—So that, if the light of the gospel has not left a sufficient provision against the wickedness of the world,——the true answer is, that there can be none.—It is sufficient that the excellency of Christianity, in doctrine and precepts, and its proper tendency to make us virtuous, as well as happy, is a strong evidence of its divine original:—And these advantages it has, above any institution that ever was in the world:—It gives the best directions,— the best examples,—the greatest encouragements,—the best helps, and the greatest obligations to gratitude.—But, as religion was not to work upon men by way of force and natural necessity,—but by moral persuasion,—which sets good and evil before them;—so, if men have power to do evil, or choose the good, and will abuse it, this cannot be avoided.—Not only religion, but even reason itself, must necessarily imply a freedom of choice;—and all the beings in the world, which have it, were created free to stand or free to fall:—And therefore, men that will not be wrought upon by this way of address, must expect, and be contented to feel the stroke of that rod which is prepared for the back of fools, oft-times in this world, but undoubtedly in the next, from the hands of a righteous Governor, who will finally render to every man according to his works.

Because this sentence is not always executed speedily, is the wise man's account of the general licentiousness which prevailed through the race of mankind,—so early as his days;—and we may allow it a place, amongst the many other fatal causes of depravation in our own;—a few of which, I shall beg leave to add to this expli-

cation of the wise man's; subjoining a few practical cautions in relation to each, as I go along.—

To begin with Solomon's account in the text, —that because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the hearts of the sons of men are fully set in them to do evil.—

It seems somewhat hard to understand the consequence, why men should grow more desperately wicked, because GOD is merciful, and gives them space to repent;—this is no natural effect, nor does the wise man intend to insinuate, that the goodness and long-suffering of GOD is the cause of the wickedness of man, by a direct efficacy to harden sinners in their course. But the scope of his discourse is this,—Because a vicious man escapes at present, he is apt to draw false conclusions from it; and, from the delay of GOD's punishment in this life, either to conceive them at so remote a distance, or perhaps, so uncertain, that, though he has some doubtful misgivings of the future, yet he hopes, in the main, that his fears are greater than his danger;—and, from observing some of the worst of men both live and die, without any outward testimony of GOD's wrath, draws from thence some flattering ground of encouragement for himself, and, with the wicked in the psalm, says in his heart, Tush, I shall never be cast down;—there shall no harm happen unto me:—As if it were necessary, if GOD is to punish at all, that he must do it presently;—— which, by the way, would rather seem to bespeak the rage and fury of an incensed party, than the determination of a wise and patient judge, who respites punishment to another state, declaring, for the wisest reasons, this is not the time for it to take place in,—but that he has appointed a day for it, wherein he will judge the world in righteousness, and makes such unalterable distinctions

betwixt the good and bad,—as to render his future judgment a full vindication of his justice.

That mankind have ever made an ill use of this forbearance, is, and, I fear, will ever be, the case;....and St. Peter, in his description of the scoffers in the latter days, who, he tells us, shall walk after their own lusts, (the worst of all characters), he gives the same sad solution of what should be their unhappy encouragement; for that, they would say,.....Where is the promise [where is the threatening, or declaration of, *e epaggelia*] of his coming? for, since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation,....that is, the world goes on in the same uninterrupted course, where all things fall alike to all, without any interposition from above, or any outward token of divine displeasure: Upon this ground, "Come ye," say they, as the prophet represents them, "I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant."

Now if you consider, you will find, that all this false way of reasoning, doth arise from that gross piece of self-flattery, that such do imagine God to be like themselves,....that is, as cruel and revengeful as they are;....and they presently think, if a fellow-creature offended them at the rate that sinners are said to offend God, and they had as much power in their hands to punish and torture them, as he has, they would be sure to execute it speedily;.....but, because they see God does it not,....therefore, they conclude, that all the talk of God's anger against vice, and his future punishment of it,....is mere talk, calculated for the terror of old women and children.....Thus speak they peace to their souls when there is no peace; .....for though a sinner, (which the wise man adds by way of caution after the text),....for, though a

sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged upon the earth,....yet, sure I know, that it shall be well with them that fear God,....but shall not be well with the wicked. Upon which argument, the psalmist, speaking in the name of God, uses this remonstrance to one under this fatal mistake, which has misled thousands ;..... These things thou didst, and I kept silence....And it seems this silence was interpreted into consent ; ....for, it follows....and thou thoughtest I was altogether such a one as thyself ;....but the psalmist adds, how ill he took this at mens hands, and that they should not know the difference between the forbearance of sinners,....and his neglect of their sins ;....but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thee.....Upon the whole of which, he bids them be better advised, and consider, lest, while they forget God, he pluck them away, and there be none to deliver them.....

Thus much for the first ground and cause which the text gives, why the hearts of the sons of men are so fully set in them to do evil ;....upon which, I have only one or two cautions to add..... That, in the first place, we frequently deceive ourselves in the calculation, that sentence shall not be speedily executed....By sad experience, vicious and debauched men find this matter to turn out very different in practice, from their expectations in theory ;—God having so contrived the nature of things, throughout the whole system of moral duties,—that every vice in some measure, should immediately revenge itself upon the doer ;—that falsehood and unfair dealing, ends in distrust and dishonor ;——that drunkenness and debauchery, should weaken the thread of life, and cut it so short that the trangressor shall not live out half his days ;—that pride should be followed by mortifications,—extravagance by poverty and distress ; —that the revengeful and malicious, should be

the greatest tormentor of himself;—the perpetual disturbance of his own mind, being so immediate a chastisement, as to verify what the wise man says upon it,——That, as the merciful man does good to his own soul, so, he that is cruel, troubleth his own flesh.

In all which cases, there is a punishment independent of these, and that is the punishment which a man's own mind takes upon itself, from the remorse of doing what is wrong.—*Prima est hæc ultio*,—this is the first revenge, which (whatever other punishments he may escape) is sure to follow close upon his heels, and haunts him wheresoever he goes;——for, whenever a man commits a wilful bad action,—he drinks down poison, which, though it may work slowly, will work surely, and give him perpetual pains and heart-aches,—and, if no means be used to expel it, will destroy him at last. So that, notwithstanding that final sentence of GOD is not executed speedily, in exact weight and measure, there is, nevertheless, a sentence executed, which a man's own conscience pronounces against him;——and every wicked man, I believe, feels as regular a process within his own breast, commenced against himself,—and finds himself as much accused, and as evidently and impartially condemned for what he has done amiss, as if he had received sentence before the most awful tribunal;—which judgment of conscience, as it can be looked upon in no other light but as an anticipation of that righteous and unalterable sentence which will be pronounced hereafter, by that Being, to whom he is finally to give an account of his actions—I cannot conceive the state of his mind, under any character, than of that anxious doubtfulness described by the prophet,—That the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and filth.

A second caution against this uniform ground of false hope, in sentence not being executed speedily, will arise from this consideration,—— That in our vain calculation of this distant point of retribution, we generally respite it to the day of judgment;—and as that may be a thousand, or ten thousand years off, it proportionably lessens the terror. To rectify this mistake, we should first consider, that the distance of a thing, no way alters the nature of it.—2dly, That we are deceived in this distant prospect, not considering, that, however far off we may fix it in this belief, that, in fact, it is no farther off from every man, than the day of his own death.—And, how certain that day is, we need not, surely, be reminded:——— It is the certainty of the matter, and of an event which will as surely come to pass, as that the sun shall rise to-morrow morning,——that should enter as much into our calculations, as if it was hanging over our heads——For though, in our fond imaginations, we dream of living many years upon the earth;—how unexpectedly are we summoned from it?——How oft, in the strength of our age, in the midst of our projects, when we are promising ourselves the ease of many years?—How oft, at that very time, and in the height of this imagination, is the decree sealed, and the commandment gone forth to call us into another world?

This may suffice for the examination of this one great cause of the corruption of the world;—from whence I should proceed, as I purposed, to an inquiry after some other unhappy causes, which have a share in this evil.—But I have taken up so much more of your time in this, than I first intended, that I shall defer what I have to say to the next occasion, and put an end to this discourse, by an answer to a question often asked, relatively to this argument, in prejudice

of Christianity, which cannot be more seasonably answered, than in a discourse at this time;—and that is, Whether the christian religion has done the world any service, in reforming the lives and morals of mankind, which some, who pretend to have considered the present state of vice, seem to doubt of?——This objection I, in some measure have anticipated in the beginning of this discourse;—and what I have to add to that argument is this,—That it is impossible to decide the point, by evidence of facts, which, at so great a distance, cannot be brought together and compared, it must be decided by reason, and the probability of things;—upon which issue, one might appeal to the most professed deist, and trust him to determine,——whether the lives of those who are set loose from all obligations but those of conveniency, can be compared with those who have been blessed with the extraordinary light of a religion?—and, whether so just and holy a religion as the christian, which sets restraints even upon our thoughts;—a religion, which gives us the most engaging ideas of the perfections of GOD,—at the same time that it impresses the most awful ones of his majesty and power;—a being rich in mercies, but if they are abused, terrible in his judgments;—one constantly about our secret paths,—about our beds;—who spieth out all our ways,—noticeth all our actions;—and is so pure in his nature that he will punish even the wicked imaginations of the heart, and has appointed a day wherein he will enter into this inquiry, and execute judgment according as we have deserved?

If either the hopes or fears, the passions or reason, of men, are to be wrought upon at all, such principles must have an effect, though, I own, very far short of what a thinking man should ex- from such motives.

No doubt there is great room for amendment in the christian world; and the professors of our holy religion, may, in general, be said to be a very corrupt and bad generation of men, considering what reasons and obligations they have to be better.—Yet still I affirm, if those restraints were lessened,—the world would be infinitely worse;—and therefore, we cannot sufficiently bless and adore the goodness of GOD, for those advantages brought by the coming of CHRIST;—which GOD grant that we may live to be more deserving of; that, in the last day, when he shall come again to judge the world, we may rise to life immortal.—*Amen.*

SERMON XXXIV.

Trust in God.

PSAL. xxxvii. 3.

Put thou thy trust in the LORD.

WHOEVER seriously reflects upon the state and condition of man, and looks upon that dark side of it, which represents his life as open to so many causes of trouble;....when he sees how often he eats the bread of affliction, and that he is born to it as naturally as the sparks fly upwards;....that no rank or degrees of men are exempted from this law of our beings;....but that all, from the high cedar of Libanus to the humble shrub upon the wall, are shook in their turns by numberless calamities and distresses:....When one sits down and looks upon this gloomy side of things, with all the sorrowful changes and chances which surround us;....at first sight, would not one wonder, how the spirit of a man could bear the infirmities of his nature, and what it is that supports him, as it does, under the many evil accidents which he meets with in his passage through the valley of tears? Without some certain aid within us to bear us up, so tender a frame as ours, would be but ill fitted to encounter what generally befals it in this rugged journey: And accordingly we find, that we are so curiously wrought by an all-wise hand, with a view to this, that, in the very composition and texture of our nature, there is a remedy and provision left against most of the evils we suffer; we being so ordered, that the principle of self-love, given us for preservation, comes in here to our aid, by opening a door of hope, and, in the worst emergencies, flattering us with a belief, that we shall extricate ourselves, and live to see better days.

This expectation, though in fact it no way al-

ters the nature of the cross accidents to which we lie open, or does at all pervert the course of them, yet imposes upon the sense of them, and, like a secret spring in a well contrived machine, though it cannot prevent, at least it counterbalances the pressure, and so bears up this tottering tender frame, under many a violent shock and hard jostling, which otherwise would unavoidably overwhelm it. Without such an inward resource, from an inclination, which is natural to man, to trust and hope for redress in the most deplorable conditions,—his state in this life would be, of all creatures the most miserable. When his mind was either wrung with affliction, or his body lay tortured with the gout or stone,—did he think, that, in this world, there should be no respite to his sorrow,—could he believe the pains he endured would continue equally intense,—without remedy,—without intermission;—with what deplorable lamentation would he languish out his day,——and how sweet, as Job says, would the *clods of the valley be to him?* But so sad a persuasion, whatever grounds there may be sometimes for it, scarce ever gets full possession of the mind of man, which, by nature, struggles against despair; so that whatever part of us suffers, the darkest mind instantly ushers in this relief to it, points out to hope,—encourages to build, though on a sandy foundation—and raises an expectation in us, that things will come to a fortunate issue. And indeed it is something surprising to consider the strange force of this passion;—what wonders it has wrought in supporting men's spirits in all ages, and under such inextricable difficulties, that they have sometimes hoped, as the apostle expresses it, even against hope,—against all likelihood; and have looked forwards with comfort under misfortunes, when there has been little or nothing to favor such an expectation.

This flattering propensity in us, which I have here represented, as it is built upon one of the most deceitful of human passions,—that is, self-love, which, at all times, inclines us to think better of ourselves, and conditions, than there is ground for; how great soever the relief is, which a man draws from it at present, it too often disappoints in the end, leaving him to go on his way sorrowing,—mourning, as the prophet says, that his hope is lost. So that, after all, in our severer trials, we still find a necessity of calling in something to aid this principle, and direct it so, that it may not wander with this uncertain expectation of what may never be accomplished, but fix itself upon a proper object of trust and reliance, that is able to fulfil our desires, to hear our cry, and to help us. The passion of hope, without this, though in straits a man may support his spirits for a time with a general expectation of better fortune; yet, like a ship tossed without a pilot upon a troublesome sea, it may float upon the surface for a while, but is never, never likely to be brought to the haven where it would be. To accomplish this, reason and religion are called in at length, and join with nature in exhorting us to hope;—but to hope in God, in whose hands are the issues of life and death,—and without whose knowledge and permission we know that not a hair of our heads can fall to the ground. Strengthened with this anchor of hope, which keeps us stedfast,—when the rains descend, and the floods come upon us,—however the sorrows of a man are multiplied, he bears up his head, looks towards heaven with confidence, waiting for the salvation of God: He then builds upon a rock, against which the gates of hell cannot prevail. He may be troubled, it is true, on every side, but shall not be distressed,—perplexed, yet not in despair: Though he walks through the valley of

the shadow of death, even then he fears no evil; —this road and this staff comfort him.

The virtue of this had been sufficiently tried by David, and had, no doubt, been of use to him in the course of a life full of afflictions; many of which were so great, that he declares, that he should verily have fainted under the sense and apprehension of them, but that he believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. He believed!—how could he do otherwise? He had all the conviction that reason and inspiration could give him,—that there was a being, in whom every thing concurred which could be the proper object of trust and confidence; power to help, and goodness always to incline him to do it. He knew this infinite being, though his dwelling was so high, that his glory was above the heavens, yet humbled himself to behold the things that are done in heaven and earth:—That he was not an idle and distant spectator of what passed there, but that he was a present help in time of trouble:——That he bowed the heavens, and came down to over-rule the course of things; ——delivering the poor, and him that was in misery, from him that was too strong for him; ——lifting the simple out of his distress, and guarding him by his providence, so that no man should do him wrong:——That neither the sun should smite him by day, neither the moon by night. Of this the psalmist had such evidence from his observation on the life of others, with the strongest conviction, at the same time, which a long life, full of personal deliverances, could give:——All which taught him the value of the lesson in the text, from which he had received so much encouragement himself,——that he transmits it for the benefit of the whole race of mankind after him, to support them, as it had done him, under the afflictions which befel him.

Trust in God:——As if he had said, Whosoever thou art, that shall hereafter fall into any such straits and troubles as I have experienced,——learn, by my example, where to seek for succor;——trust not in princes, nor in any child of man, for there is no help in them: The sons of men, who are of low degree, are vanity, and are not able to help thee;——men of high degree are a lie, too often deceive thy hopes, and will not help thee: But thou, when thy soul is in heaviness, turn thy eyes from the earth, and look up towards heaven, to that infinitely kind and powerful Being, who neither slumbereth nor sleepeth; who is a present help in time of trouble:—Despond not, and say within thyself, why the chariot wheels stay so long?—and why he vouchsafeth thee not a speedy relief?——but arm thy self, in thy misfortunes, with patience and fortitude;——trust in God, who sees all those conflicts under which thou laborest;————who knows thy necessities afar off, and puts all thy tears into his bottle;——who sees every careful thought and pensive look, and hears every sigh and melancholy groan thou utterest.

In all thy exigencies, trust and depend on him; nor ever doubt, but he, who heareth the cry of the fatherless, and defendeth the cause of the widow, if it is just, will hear thine,——and either lighten thy burden, and let thee go free,——or, which is the same, if that seems not meet, by adding strength to thy mind, enable thee to sustain what he has suffered to be laid upon thee.

Whoever recollects the particular psalms said to be composed by this great man, under the several distresses and cross-accidents of his life, will perceive the justice of this paraphrase, which is agreeable to the strain of reasoning,—which runs through,—which is little else than a recollection of his own words and thoughts upon those occa-

sions, in all which he appears to have been no less signal in his afflictions, than in his piety, and in that goodness of soul which he discovers under them. I said, the reflections upon his own life, and providential escapes which he had experienced, had had a share in forming these religious sentiments of trust in his mind, which had so early taken root, that when he was going to fight the Philistines, when he was but a youth, and stood before Saul, he had already learned to argue in this manner:—Let no man's heart fail him;—— thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock, and I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth; and when he arose against me, I caught him by the beard, and smote him and slew him;—thy servant slew both the lion and the bear, and this uncircumcised Philistine will be as one of them;—for the Lord, who delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will also deliver me out of his hand.

The conclusion was natural; and the experience which every man has had of God's former loving kindness and protection to him, either in danger or distress, does unavoidably engage him to think in the same train. It is observable, that the apostle St. Paul, encouraging the Corinthians to bear with patience the trials incident to human nature, reminds them of the deliverances that God did formerly vouchsafe to him, and his fellow laborers, Gaius and Aristarchus; and on that ground builds a rock of encouragement, for future trust and dependence on him. His life had been in a very great jeopardy at Ephesus, where he had like to have been brought out to the theatre, to be devored by wild beasts, and, indeed had no human means to avert, and consequently to escape it; and therefore, he tells them

that he had this advantage by it, that the more he believed he should be put to death, the more he was engaged, by his deliverance, never to depend on any worldly trust, but only on GOD, who can rescue from the greatest extremity, even from the grave, and death itself. For we would not, brethren, says he, have you ignorant of our trouble, which came to us in Asia,—that we were pressed out of measure, above our strength, insomuch, that we despaired even of life; but we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in GOD, who raiseth the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver, and in whom we trust that he will deliver us.

And, indeed, a stronger argument cannot be brought for future trust, than the remembrance of past protection; for, what ground or reason can I have to distrust the kindness of that person, who has always been my friend and benefactor?

On whom can I better rely for assistance in the day of my distress, than on him who stood by me in all mine affliction, and, when I was at the brink of destruction, delivered me out of all my troubles?—Would it not be highly ungrateful, and reflect either upon his goodness or his sufficiency, to distrust that Providence, which has always had a watchful eye over me? and who, according to his gracious promises, will never leave me, nor forsake me; and who in all my wants, in all my emergencies, has been abundantly more willing to give, than I to ask it?—If the former and the latter rain have hitherto descended upon the earth in due season, and seed time and harvest have never yet failed;—why should I fear famine in the land, or doubt, but that he who feedeth the raven, and providently scattereth for the sparrow, should likewise be my comfort? How unlikely is it that ever he should suffer his truth

to fail?——This train of reflection, from the consideration of past mercies, is suitable and natural to all mankind; there being no one, who, by calling to mind GOD's kindnesses, which have been ever of old, but will see cause to apply the argument to himself.

And though, in looking back upon the events which have befallen us, we are apt to attribute too much to the arm of flesh, in recounting the more successful parts of them,—saying, My wisdom, my parts, and address, extricated me from this misfortune;——my foresight and penetration saved me from the second;—my courage, and the mightiness of my strength, carried me through a third:—However we are accustomed to talk in this manner, yet, whoever coolly sits down and reflects upon the many accidents (though very improperly called so) which have befallen him in the course of his life;—when he considers the many amazing turns in his favor, sometimes in the most unpromising cases,—and often brought about by the most unlikely causes;—when he remembers the particular providences which have gone along with him,—the many personal deliverances which have preserved him,——the unaccountable manner in which he has been enabled to get through difficulties, which on all sides beset him, at one time of his life,——or the strength of mind he found himself endowed with, to encounter afflictions, which fell upon him at another period:—Where is the man, I say, who looks back, with the least religious sense, upon what has thus happened to him, who could not give you sufficient proof of GOD's power, and his arm over him, and recount several cases, wherein the GOD of Jacob was his help, and the holy one of Israel his redeemer!

Hast thou ever laid upon the bed of languishing, or labored under a grievous distemper which threatened thy life? Call to mind thy sorrowful

and pensive spirit at that time; and add to it, who it was that had mercy on thee, that brought thee out of darkness and the shadow of death, and made all thy bed in thy sickness.

Hath the scantiness of thy condition hurried thee into great straits and difficulties, and brought thee almost to distraction? Consider who it was that spread thy table in that wilderness of thought —who it was made thy cup to overflow,——who added a friend of consolation to thee, and thereby spake peace to thy troubled mind. Hast thou over sustained any considerable damage in thy stock or trade? Bethink thyself who it was that gave thee a serene and contented mind under those losses. If thou hast recovered, consider who it was that repaired those breaches, when thy own skill and endeavors failed: Call to mind whose providence has blessed them since,—whose hand it was that has since set a hedge about thee, and made all that thou hast done to prosper. Hast thou ever been wounded in thy more tender part, through the loss of an obliging husband? or hast thou been torn away from the embraces of a dear and promising child, by its unexpected death?——

O consider, whether the God of truth did not approve himself a father to thee, when fatherless, —or a husband to thee, when a widow; and has either given thee a name better than that of sons and daughters, or even beyond thy hope,—made thy remaining tender branches to grow up, tall and beautiful, like the cedars of Libanus.

Strengthened by these considerations, suggesting the same, or like past deliverances, either to thyself, thy friends or acquaintance,—thou wilt learn this great lesson in the text,—in all thy exigencies and distresses—to trust God; and, whatever befals thee, in the many changes and chances of this mortal life, to speak comfort to thy

soul, and to say in the words of Habakkuk the prophet, with which I conclude,——

Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; although the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yeild no meat; although the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet we will rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of our salvation.

To whom be all honor and glory, now and for ever. *Amen.*

SERMON XXXV.

EXODUS xxi. 14.

But if a man come presumptuously upon his neighbor, to slay him with guile;—thou shalt take him from my altar, that he may die.

AS the end and happy result of society, was, our mutual protection from the depredations which malice and avarice lay us open to,—so have the laws of GOD laid proportionable restraints against such violations as would defeat us of such a security. Of all other attacks which can be made against us,—that of a mans's life,—which is his all,—being the greatest,——the offence, in GOD's dispensation to the Jews, was denounced as the most heinous,—and represented as most unpardonable. At the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man.——Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.—Ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer;—he shall surely be put to death.—So ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are,——for blood defileth the land;——and the land cannot be cleansed of blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it.—For this reason, by the laws of all civilized nations, in all parts of the globe, it has been punished with death.

Some civilized and wise communities have so far incorporated these severe dispensations into their municipal laws, as to allow of no distinction betwixt murder and homicide.——at least in the penalty;—leaving the intentions of the several parties concerned in it, to that Being who knows the heart, and will adjust the differences of the case hereafter. This falls, no doubt, heavy upon particulars;—but it is urged for the benefit of the whole. It is not the business of a preacher to enter into an examination of the grounds

and reasons for so seeming a severity.——Where most severe,——they have proceeded, no doubt, from an excess of abhorrence of a crime——— which is, of all others, most terrible and shocking in its own nature,——and the most direct attack and stroke at society;——as the security of a man's life was the first protection of society,—— the ground work of all other blessings to be desired from such a compact. Thefts,——oppressions—exactions, and violences of that kind, cut off the branches;——this smote the root:——All perished with it;——the injury irreparable.—No after-act could make amends for it. What recompence can he give to a man in exchange for his life?—What satisfaction to the widow,—the fatherless,—to the family,—the friends,—the relations cut off from his protection, and rendered, perhaps, destitute,—perhaps miserable for ever!

No wonder, that, by the law of nature, this crime was always pursued with the most extreme vengeance; which made the barbarians to judge, when they saw St. Paul upon the point of dying a sudden and terrifying death.—No doubt this man is a murderer; whom, though he has escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live.

The censure, there, was rash and uncharitable; but the honest detestation of the crime was uppermost. They saw a dreadful punishment—— they thought; and in seeing the one,——they suspected the other. And the vengeance which had overtaken the holy man, was meant by them the vengeance and punishment of the almighty Being, whose providence and honor was concerned in pursuing him, from the place he had fled from, to that island.

The honor and authority of God is most evidently struck at, most certainly, in every such crime,—and therefore he would pursue it;—it being the reason, in the ninth of Genesis, upon

which the prohibition of murder is grounded;—for in the image of God created he man;—as if to attempt the life of a man had something in it peculiarly daring and audacious; not only shocking as to its consequence, above all other crimes,—but of personal violence and indignity against God, the author of our life and death. That it is the highest act of injustice to man, and which will admit of no compensation, I have said.—But the depriving a man of life, does not comprehend the whole of his suffering;——he may be cut off in an unprovided or disordered condition, with regard to the great account betwixt himself and his Maker. He may be under the power of irregular passions and desires. The best of men are not always upon their guard.—And I am sure we have all reason to join in that affecting part of our Litany,—That, amongst other evils,—God would deliver us from sudden death;—that we may have some foresight of that period, to compose our spirits,—prepare our accounts,—and put ourselves in the best posture we can to meet it;—for, after we are most prepared,——it is a terror to human nature.

The people of some nations are said to have a peculiar art in poisoning by slow and gradual advances. In this case,—however horrid,—it savors of mercy with regard to our spiritual state;—for, the sensible decays of nature, which a sufferer must feel within him, from the secret workings of the horrid drug, give warning, and show that mercy, which the bloody hand that comes upon his neighbor suddenly, and slays him with guile,—has denied him. It may serve to admonish him of the duty of repentance, and to make his peace with God, whilst he had time and opportunity. The speedy execution of justice, which as our laws now stand, and which were intended for that end, must strike the greater terror upon that ac-

count. Short as the interval between sentence and death is, it is long compared to the case of the murdered.—Thou allowedest the man no time,—said the judge to a late criminal, in a most affecting manner;—thou allowedest him not a moment to prepare for eternity;—and, to one who thinks at all, it is, of all reflections and self accusations, the most heavy and unsurmountable —That, by the hand of violence, a man in a perfect state of health, whilst he walks out in perfect security, as he thinks, with his friends,—— perhaps whilst he is sleeping soundly,—to be hurried out of the world by the assassin,—by a sudden stroke—to find himself at the bar of God's justice, without notice and preparation for trial, ——it is most horrible!

Though he be really a good man, (and it is to be hoped God makes merciful allowances in such cases),—yet, it is a terrifying consideration at the best;—and, as the injury is greater, there are also very aggravating circumstances relating to the person who commits this act;—As, when it is the effect, not of a rash and sudden passion, which sometimes disorders and confounds reason for a moment,—but of a deliberate and propense design or malice;—when the sun not only goes down, but rises upon his wrath;—when he sleeps not —till he has struck the stroke;—when, after he has had time and leisure to recollect himself,— and consider what he is going to do;—when, after all the checks of conscience,—the struggles of humanity,——the recoiling of his own blood, at the thoughts of shedding another man's—he shall persist still,——and resolve to do it. Merciful God! protect us——from doing or suffering such evils. Blessed be thy name and providence, which seldom or ever suffers it to escape with impunity. —In vain does the guilty flatter himself with hopes of secrecy or impunity:—The eye of God

is always upon him.——Whither can he fly from his presence!——By the immensity of his nature, he is at present in all places—by the infinity of it, to all times;———by his omniscience, to all thoughts, words, and actions of men, by an emphatical phrase in scripture, the blood of the innocent is said to cry to heaven from the ground for vengeance;—and it was for this reason, that he might be brought to justice,——that he was debared the benefit of any asylum, and the cities of refuge.——For the elders of his city shall send and fetch him thence, and deliver him into the hand of the avenger of blood,——and their eye should not pity him.

The text says,——Thou shalt take him from my altar, that he may die. It had been a very ancient imagination, that, for men, guilty of this, and other horrid crimes,——a place held sacred, as dedicated to God, was a refuge and protection to them from the hands of justice. The law of God cuts the transgressor off from all delusive hopes of this kind;—and I think the Romish church has very little to boast of, in the sanctuaries which she leaves open for this, and other crimes and irregularities;——sanctuaries, which are often the first temptations to wickedness, and therefore, bring the greater scandal and dishonor to her that authorizes their pretensions.

Every obstruction of the course of justice—— is a door open to betray society, and bereave us of those blessings which it has in view. To stand up for the privileges of such places, is to invite men to sin with a bribe of impunity. It is a strange way of doing honor to God, to screen actions which are a disgrace to humanity.

What scripture, and all civilized nations, teach concerning the crime of taking away another man's life,——is applicable to the wickedness of a man's attempting to bereave himself of his own.

He has no more right over it,——than over that of others:——And, whatever false glosses have been put upon it by men of bad heads or bad hearts,——it is at the bottom a complication of cowardice, and wickedness, and weakness;—— is one of the fatalest mistakes, desparation can hurry a man into;—inconsistent with all the reasoning and religion of the world, and irreconcileable with that patience under afflictions,—that resignation and submission to the will of GOD in all straits, which is required of us. But, if our calamities are brought upon ourselves by a man's own wickedness,—still has he less to urge, least reason has he to renounce the protection of GOD—when he most stands in need of it, and of his mercy.

But, as I intend the subject of self murder for my discourse next Sunday,—I shall not anticipate what I have to say,—but proceed to consider some other cases, in which the law relating to the life of our neighbor is transgressed in different degrees. All which are generally spoken of under the subject of murder,——and considered by the best casuists as a species of the same,——and, in justice to the subject, cannot be passed here.—— St. John says, Whosoever hateth his brother, is a murderer;—it is the first step to this sin;—and our Saviour, in his sermon upon the Mount, has explained in how many slighter and unsuspected ways and degrees,—the command in the law,—— Thou shalt do no murder, may be opposed, if not broken. All real mischiefs and injuries maliciously brought upon a man, to the sorrow and disturbance of his mind,——eating out the comfort of his life, and shortening his days,——are this sin in disguise;—and the grounds of the scripture expressing it with such severity, is,—that the beginnings of wrath and malice,—in event, often extend to such great and unforeseen effects, as, were we foretold them, we should give so little credit

to, as to say,—Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?—And, though these beginnings do not necessarily produce the worst, (God forbid they should), yet, they cannot be committed without these evil seeds are first sown: As Cain's causeless anger (as Dr. Clark observes) against his brother,—to which the apostle alludes,——ended in taking away his life;——and the best instructors teach us, that, to avoid a sin,—we must avoid the steps and temptations which lead to it.

This should warn us to free our minds from all tincture of avarice and desire after what is another man's. It operates the same way,—and has terminated too oft in the same crime. And it is the great excellency of the Christian religion,—that it has an eye to this, in the stress laid upon the first springs of evil in the heart;—rendering us accountable, not only for our words,—but the thoughts themselves,—if not checked in time, but suffered to proceed farther than the first motions of concupiscence.

Ye have heard, therefore, says our Saviour, that it was said by them of old time,——Thou shalt not kill;——but I say unto you,——Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment;—and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca,—shall be in danger of the council;—but whosoever shall say, "Thou fool,"——shall be in danger of hell-fire. The interpretation of which, I shall give you in words of a great scripturist, Dr. Clark,——and is as follows: That the three gradations of crimes are an allusion to the three different degrees of punishment, in the three courts of judicature amongst the Jews. And our Saviour's meaning was,——That every degree of sin, from its first conception to its outrage,——every degree of malice and hatred,———shall receive from God a punishment proportionable to the offence. Where-

as, the old law, according to the Jewish interpretation, extended not to these things at all—forbade only murder and outward injuries. Whosoever shall say, "Thou fool," shall be in danger of hell-fire.——The sense of which is not, that, in the strict and literal acceptation, every rash and passionate expression shall be punished with eternal damnation;——(for who then would be saved?)——but that at the exact account in the judgment of the great day, every secret thought and intent of the heart shall have its just estimation and weight, in the degrees of punishment which shall be assigned to every one in his final state.

There is another species of this crime, which is seldom taken notice of in discourses upon the subject, and yet can be reduced to no other class:———And that is, where the life of our neighbor is shortened,———and often taken away, as directly as by a weapon, by the empirical sale of nostrums and quack medicines,——which ignorance and avarice blend.———The loud tongue of ignorance impudently promises much,—and the ear of the sick is open.—And as many of these pretenders deal in edge-tools, ———too many, I fear, perish with the misapplication of them.

So great are the difficulties of tracing out the hidden causes of the evils to which this frame of ours is subject,—that the most candid of the profession have ever allowed and lamented how unavoidably they are in the dark. So that the best medicines, administered with the wisest heads,—shall often do the mischief they were intended to prevent.——These are misfortunes to which we are subject in this state of darkness;——but when men, without skill,—without education,—without knowledge either of the distemper, or even of what they sell,——make merchandize of the miserable,——and, from a disho-

nest principle—trifle with the pains of the unfortunate,—too often with their lives,—and from the mere motive of a dishonest gain;—every such instance, of a person bereft of life by the hand of ignorance, can be considered in no other light than a branch of the same root.——It is murder in the true sense; which, though not cognizable by our laws,———by the laws of right, every man's own mind and conscience must appear equally black and detestable.———

In doing what is wrong,—we stand chargeable with all the bad consequences which arise from the action, whether foreseen or not.—And as the principal view of the empiric, in those cases, is not what he always pretends—the good of the public,——but the good of himself,——it makes the action what it is.——

Under this head, it may not be improper to comprehend all adulterations of medicines, wilfully made worse through avarice. If a life is lost by such wilful adulterations,——and, it may be affirmed, that in many critical turns of an acute distemper, there is but a single cast left for the patient——the trial and chance of a single drug in his behalf;——if that has wilfully been adulterated, and wilfully despoiled of its best virtues,——what will the vender answer?——

May God grant we may all answer well for ourselves, that we may be finally happy. *Amen.*

SERMON XXXVI.

Sanctity of the Apostles.

MATT. xi. 6.

Blessed is he that shall not be offended in me.

THE general prejudices of the Jewis nation concerning the royal state and condition of the Saviour who was to come into the world, ——was a stone of stumbling, and a rock of fence to the greatest part of that unhappy and prepossessed people, when the promise was actually fulfilled.——Whether it was altogether the traditions of their fathers,—or that the rapturous expressions of the prophets, which represented the MESSIAH's spiritual kingdom in such extent of power and dominion, misled them into it,——or, that their own carnal expectations turned wilful interpreters upon them, inclining them to look for nothing but the wealth and worldly grandeur which were to be acquired under their deliverer; ——whether these,—or that the system of temporal blessings helped to cherish them in this gross and covetous expectation,——it was one of the great causes for their rejecting him.——"This "fellow, we know not whence he is,"—was the popular cry of one part;——and they, who seemed to know whence he was, scornfully turned it against him, by the repeated query,——Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joses, and of Juda and Simeon?—and are not his sisters here with us?—And they were offended at him.——So that, though he was prepared by GOD to be the glory of his people Israel, yet the circumstances of humility, in which he was manifested, were thought a scandal to them.——Strange!—that he who was born their king,—should be born of no other virgin than Mary——the meanest of their people,——for he

hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden; ——and one of the poorest too,——for she had not a lamb to offer,——but was purified, as Moses directed in such a case, by the oblation of a turtle-dove:——That the SAVIOUR of their nation, whom they expected to be ushered amidst them with all the ensigns and apparatus of royalty, should be brought forth in a stable, and answerable to distress;.....subjected all his life to the lowest conditions of humanity:.....That whilst he lived, he should not have a hole to put his head in, nor his corpse in when he died,——but his grave too, must be the gift of charity:——These were thwarting considerations to those who waited for the redemption of Israel, and looked for it in no other shape, than the accomplishment of those golden dreams of temporal power and sovereignty, which had filled their imaginations. The ideas were not to be reconciled: And so insuperable an obstacle was the prejudice on one side, to their belief on the other,——that it literally fell out, as Simeon prophetically declared of the MESSIAH,——that he was set forth for the fall, as well as the rising again, of many in Israel.

This, though it was the cause of their infidelity, was however no excuse for it. For, whatever their mistakes were, the miracles which were wrought in contradiction to them, brought conviction enough, to leave them without excuse;—and besides, it was natural for them to have concluded, had their prepossessions given them leave, —that he, who fed five thousand with five loaves and two fishes, could not want power to be great; —and therefore needed not to appear in the condition of poverty and meanness, had it not, on other scores, been more needful to confront the pride and vanity of the world,—and to show his followers what the temper of Christianity was by the temper of its first institutor;—who, though

they were offered, and he could have commanded them,—despised the glories of the world,—took upon him the form of a servant;—and, though equal with GOD,—yet made himself of no reputation,—that he might settle, and be the example of, so holy and humble a religion, and thereby convince his disciples for ever, that neither his kingdom, nor their happiness, were to be of this world. Thus the Jews might have easily argued;—but when there was nothing but reason to do it with on one side, and strong prejudices, backed with interest, to maintain the dispute upon the other—we do not find the point is always so easily determined. Although the purity of our SAVIOUR's doctrine, and the mighty works he wrought in its support, were demonstratively stronger arguments for his divinity, than the unrespected lowliness of his condition could be against it;—yet the prejudice continued strong;—they had been accustomed to temporal promises;——so bribed to do their duty,——they could not endure to think of a religion that would not promise as much as Moses did, to fill their basket, and set them high above all nations:—A religion whose appearance was not great and splendid,——but looked thin and meagre;——and whose principles and promises, like the curses of their law,————called for sufferings, and promised persecutions.

If we take this key along with us through the New Testament, it will let us into the spirit and meaning of many of our Saviour's replies in his conferences with his disciples, and others of the Jews;——so particularly in this place, Matt. xi. when John had sent two of his disciples to inquire, Whether it was he that should come, or that they were to look for another?—Our Saviour, with a particular eye to this prejudice, and the general scandal he knew had risen against his

religion, upon this worldly account,—after a recital to the messengers of the many miracles he had wrought; as that—the blind received their sight,—the lame walked,—the lepers were cleansed,—the dead raised;——all which characters, with their benevolent ends, fully demonstrated him to be the MESSIAH that was promised them; he closes up his answer to them, with the words of the text,—And blessed is he that shall not be offended in me;——blessed is the man whose upright and honest heart will not be blinded by worldly considerations, or hearken to his lusts and prepossessions in a truth of this moment. The like benediction is recorded in the 7th chapter of St. Luke, and in the 6th of St. John:——When Peter broke out in that warm confession of their belief—Lord, we believe,——we are sure that thou art Christ, the Son of the living GOD:—The same benediction is uttered,—though couched in different words,—Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona;—for flesh and blood hath not revealed it, but my Father which is in Heaven. Flesh and blood,—the natural workings of this carnal desire,—the lust and love of the world, have had no hand in this conviction of thine; but my Father, and the works which I have wrought in his name,—in vindication of this faith, have established thee in it, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail.—This universal ruling principle, and almost invincible attachment to the interests and glories of the world, which we see first made so powerful a stand against the belief of Christianity, has continued to have as ill an effect, at least, upon the practice of it ever since;—and therefore, there is no one point of wisdom that is of nearer importance to us,—than to purify this gross appetite, and restrain it within bounds, by lowering our high conceit of the things of this life, and our concern for those advantages which misled the

Jews.——To judge justly of the world———we must stand at a due distance from it;—which will discover to us the vanity of its riches and honors, in such true dimensions, as will engage us to behave ourselves towards them with moderation. This is all that is wanting to make us wise and good;——that we may be left to the full influence of religion;——to which christianity so far conduces, that it is the great blessing, the peculiar advantage we enjoy under its institution,—that it affords us not only the most excellent precepts of this kind, but also, it shows us those precepts confirmed by most excellent examples.—A heathen philosopher may talk very elegantly about despising the world, and, like Seneca, may prescribe very ingenious rules, to teach us an art he never exercised himself:—For, all the while he was writing in praise of poverty, he was enjoying a great estate, and endeavoring to make it greater. But, if ever we hope to reduce those rules to practice, it must be by the help of religion.—If we would find men, who, by their lives, bore witness to their doctrines, we must look for them amongst the acts and monuments of our church,—amongst the first followers of their crucified Master; who spoke with authority, because they spoke experimentally, and took care to make their words good,—by despising the world, and voluntarily accounting all things in it loss, that they might win CHRIST.—O holy and blessed apostles!—blessed were ye indeed,——for ye conferred not with flesh and blood,—for ye were not offended in him through any considerations of this world;——— ye conferred not with flesh and blood, neither with its snares and temptations.—Neither the pleasures of life, or the pains of death laid hold upon your faith, to make you fall from him.———Ye had your prejudices of worldly grandeur, in common with the rest of your nation;——saw, like them,

your expectations blasted;———but ye gave them up, as men governed by reason and truth. —As ye surrendered all your hopes in this world to your faith, with fortitude,—so did ye meet the terrors of the world with the same temper.——— Neither the frowns and discountenances of the civil powers,—neither tribulation, or distress, or persecution,—or cold,—or nakedness,—or famine, —or the sword, could separate you from the love of CHRIST.———Ye took up your crosses cheerfully, and followed him;—followed the same rugged way—trod the wine-press after him;——voluntarily submitting yourselves to poverty,—to punishment,—to the scorn and the reproaches of the world, which ye knew were to be the portion of all of you who engaged in preaching a mystery, so spoken against by the world,———so unpalatable to all its passions and pleasures,—and so irreconcileable to the pride of human reason. So that ye were, as one of ye expressed, and all of ye experimentally found, though ye were made as the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things, upon this account;—yet ye went on as zealously as ye set out.——Ye were not offended, nor ashamed of the gospel of CHRIST:—Wherefore should ye?———The impostor and hypocrite might have been ashamed;—the guilty would have found cause for it:——Ye had no cause,—— though ye had temptation.—Ye preached but what ye knew, and your honest and upright hearts gave evidence,—the strongest,—to the truth of it;—— for ye left all,—ye suffered all,—ye gave all that your sincerity had left you to give.——Ye gave your lives at last as pledges and confirmations of your faith and warmest affection for your Lord. Holy and blessed men! ye gave all, when, alas! our cold and frozen affection will part with nothing for his sake, not even with our vices and follies, which are worse than nothing;—for they are vanity, and misery, and death.———

The state of christianity calls not now for such evidences as the apostles gave of their attachment to it.—We have, literally speaking,—neither houses, nor lands, nor possessions to forsake ;——— we have neither wives or children, or brethren or sisters, to be torn from ;—no rational pleasure—or natural endearments to give up. We have nothing to part with,—but what is not our interest to keep,——our lusts and passions. We have nothing to do for CHRIST's sake—but what is most for our own ;——that is,—to be temperate, and chaste, and just,—and peaceable,—and charitable, —and kind to one another. ———So that if man could suppose himself in a capacity even of capitulating with GOD, concerning the terms upon which he would submit to his government,—and to choose the laws he would be bound to observe in testimony of his faith ;—it were impossible for him to make any proposals, which, upon all accounts, should be more advantageous to his interest,—than those very conditions to which we are already obliged ; that is, to deny ourselves ungodliness, to live soberly and righteously in this present life, and lay such restraints upon our appetites, as are for the honor of human nature,—the improvement of our happiness,—our health, —our peace,—our reputation and safety. When one considers this representation of the temporal inducements of christianity,—and compares it with the difficulties and discouragements which they encountered who first made profession of a persecuted and hated religion ;——at the same time that it raises the idea of the fortitude and sanctity of those holy men, of whom the world was not worthy,—it sadly diminishes that of ourselves—which, though it has all the blessings of this life apparently on its side to support it, yet can scarce be kept alive. And if we may form a judgment from the little stock of religion which

is left,—should GOD ever exact the same trials, unless we greatly alter for the better, or there should prove some secret charm in persecution, which we know not of;—it is much to be doubted, if the Son of man should make this proof of this generation,——whether there would be found faith upon the earth.

As this argument may convince us, so let it shame us into virtue, that the admirable examples of those holy men may not be left us, or commemorated by us to no end;——but rather that they may answer the pious purpose of their institution,——to conform our lives to theirs;—that with them we may be partakers of a glorious inheritance, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD. *Amen.*

SERMON XXXVII.

Penances.

1 JOHN v. 3.

And his commandments are not grievous.

NO,——they are not grievous, my dear auditors.—Amongst the many prejudices which, at one time or other, have been conceived against our holy religion, there is scarce any one which has done more dishonor to christianity, or which has been more opposite to the spirit of the gospel, than this, in express contradiction to the words of the text, "That the commandments of GOD "*are* grievous;"——that the way which leads to life is not only strait—for that, our SAVIOUR tells us,—and that with much tribulation we shall seek it;—but that christians are bound to make the worst of it, and tread it barefoot upon thorns and briars,—if ever they expect to arrive happily at their journey's end;—and, in course, during this disastrous pilgrimage, it is our duty so to renounce the world, and abstract ourselves from it, as neither to interfere with its interests, or taste any of the pleasures, or any of the enjoyments of this life.——

Nor has this been confined merely to speculation, but has frequently been extended to practice, as is plain, not only from the lives of many legendary saints and hermits,—whose chief commendation seems to have been, "That they fled unnaturally from all commerce with their fellow-creatures, and then mortified, and piously—— half-starved themselves to death;"—but likewise from the many austere and fantastic orders which we see in the Romish church, which have all owed their origin and establishment to the same idle and extravagant opinion.

Nor is it to be doubted, but the affectation of something like it in our methodists, when they descant upon the necessity of alienating themselves from the world, and selling all that they have,—is not to be ascribed to the same mistaken enthusiastic principle, which would cast so black a shade upon religion, as if the kind author of it had created us on purpose to go mourning, all our lives long, in sackcloth and ashes, and sent us into the world as so many saint-errants, in quest of adventures full of sorrow and affliction.

Strange force of enthusiasm!—and yet not altogether unaccountable. For, what opinion was there ever so odd, or action so extravagant, which has not, at one time or other, been produced by ignorance,—conceit,—melancholy,——a mixture of devotion, with an ill concurrence of air and diet, operating together in the same person,—— When the minds of men happen to be thus unfortunately prepared, whatever groundless doctrine rises up, and settles itself strongly upon their fancies, has generally the ill luck to be interpreted as an illumination from the spirit of GOD; and whatever strange action they find in themselves a strong inclination to do,——that impulse is concluded to be a call from heaven; and consequently, that they cannot err in executing it.

If this, or some such account, was not to be admitted, how is it possible to be conceived, that Christianity, which breathed out nothing but peace and comfort to mankind, which professedly took off the severities of the Jewish law, and was given us in the spirit of meekness, to ease our shoulders of a burden which was too heavy for us; —that this religion, so kindly calculated for the ease and tranquillity of man, which enjoins nothing but what is suitable to his nature, should be so misunderstood;—or that it should ever be supposed, that he who is infinitely happy, could en-

vy us our enjoyments;—or that a Being infinitely kind, would grudge a mournful passenger a little rest and refreshment, to support his spirits through a weary pilgrimage;—or that he should call him to an account hereafter, because, in his way, he had hastily snatched at some fugacious and innocent pleasures, till he was suffered to take up his final repose?—This is no improbable account; and the many invitations we find in scripture, to a grateful enjoyment of the blessings and advantages of life, make it evident. The apostle tells us in the text,—that GOD's commandments are not grievous. He has pleasure in the prosperity of his people, and wills not that they should turn tyrants and executioners upon their minds or bodies, and inflict pains and penalties on them to no end or purpose:—That he has proposed peace and plenty, joy and victory, as the encouragement and portion of his servants; thereby instructing us, that our virtue is not necessarily endangered by the fruition of outward things; but that temporal blessings and advantages, instead of extinguishing, more naturally kindle our love and gratitude to GOD, before whom it is noway inconsistent both to worship and rejoice.

If this was not so, why, you will say, does GOD seem to have made such provision for our happiness? Why has he given us so many powers and faculties for enjoyment, and adapted so many objects to gratify and entertain them? Some of which he has created so fair,——with such wonderful beauty, and has formed them so exquisitely for this end,—that they have power, for a time to charm away the sense of pain,———to chear up the dejected heart under poverty and sickness, and make it go and remember its miseries no more. Can all this, you will say, be reconciled to God's wisdom, which does nothing in vain?———or can it be accounted for on any

other supposition, but that the Author of our being, who has given us all things richly to enjoy, wills us a comfortable existence even *here*, and seems, moreover, so evidently to have ordered things, with a view to this, that the ways which lead to our future happiness, when rightly understood, he has made to be ways of pleasantness, and all her paths peace?

From this representation of things, we are led to this demonstrative truth, then—That GOD never intended to debar man of pleasure, under certain limitations.

Travellers on a business of the last and most important concern, may be allowed to please their eyes with the natural and artificial beauties of the country they are passing thro', without reproach of forgetting the main errand they were sent upon; and if they are not led out of their road by variety of prospects, edifices and ruins, would it not be a senseless piece of severity, to shut their eyes against such gratifications? *For who has required such service at their hands?*

The humoring of certain appetites, where morality is not concerned, seems to be the means by which the Author of nature intended to sweeten this journey of life, and bear us up under the many shocks and hard jostlings, which we are sure to meet with in our way. And a man might, with as much reason, muffle up himself against sunshine and fair weather, and at other times expose himself naked to the inclemencies of cold and rain, as debar himself of the innocent delights of his nature, for affected reserve and melancholy.

It is true, on the other hand, our passions are so apt to grow upon us by indulgence, and become exorbitant if they are not kept under exact discipline, that by way of caution and prevention, it were better, at certain times, to affect some degree of needless reserve, than hazard any ill consequences from the other extreme.

But when almost the whole of religion is made to consist in the pious fooleries of penances and sufferings, as is practised in the church of Rome, (did no other evil attend it); yet, since it is putting religion upon a wrong scent, placing it more in these, than in inward purity and integrity of heart, one cannot guard too much against this, as well as all other such abuses of religion, as make it to consist in something which it ought not. How such mockery became a part of religion at first, or upon what motives they were imagined to be services acceptable to GOD, is hard to give a better account of, than what was hinted above; ——namely,—that men of melancholy and morose tempers, conceiving the Deity to be, like themselves, a gloomy, discontented, and sorrowful Being,——believed he delighted, as they did, in splenetic and mortifying actions, and therefore, made their religious worship to consist of chimeras, as wild and barbarous as their own dreams and vapors.

What ignorance and enthusiasm at first introduced,—now tyranny and imposture continue to support. So that the political improvement of these delusions, to the purposes of wealth and power, is made one of the strongest pillars which upholds the Romish religion;—which, with all its pretences to a more strict mortification and sanctity,—when you examine it minutely, is little else than a mere pecuniary contrivance. And the truest definition you can give of popery,—is, that it is a system put together and contrived to operate upon mens weaknesses and passions,—and thereby to pick their pockets,——and leave them in a fit condition for its arbitrary designs.

And indeed that church has not been wanting in gratitude for the good offices of this kind, which the doctrine of penances has done them; for, in consideration of its services—they have raised it

above the level of moral duties,——and have at length, complimented it into the number of their sacraments, and made it a necessary point of salvation.

By these, and other tenets, no less politic and inquisitional,——popery has found out the art of making men miserable in spite of their senses, and the plenty with which GOD has blessed them.

So that in many countries where popery reigns ——but especially in that part of Italy where she has raised her throne,——though, by the happiness of its soil and climate, it is capable of producing as great variety and abundance as any country upon earth;——yet so successful have its spiritual directors been in the management and retail of these blessings, that they have found means to allay, if not entirely to defeat them all, by one pretence or other. Some bitterness is officiously squeezed into every man's cup, for his soul's health, till, at length, the whole intention of nature and providence is destroyed. It is not surprising, that where such unnatural severities are practised and heightened by other hardships,—— the most fruitful land should be barren, and wear a face of poverty and desolation;—or that many thousands, as have been observed, should fly from the rigors of such a government, and seek shelter rather amongst rocks and deserts, than lie at the mercy of so many unreasonable task-masters, under whom they can hope for no other reward of their industry,——but rigorous slavery, made still worse by the tortures of unnecessary mortifications.——I say, *unnecessary*;——because where there *is* a virtuous and good end proposed, from any sober instances of self-denial and mortification —God forbid we should call them unnecessary, or that we should dispute against a thing—from the abuse to which it has been put;——and therefore, what is said in general upon this head, will

be understood to reach no farther than where the practice is become a mixture of fraud and tyranny; but will nowise be interpreted to extend to those self-denials which the discipline of our holy church directs at this solemn season,—which have been introduced by reason and good sense at first, and have since been applied to serve no purposes—but those of religion:—These, by restraining our appetites for a while, and withdrawing our thoughts from grosser objects,——do, by a mechanical effect, dispose us for cool and sober reflections,—incline us to turn our eyes inward upon ourselves, and consider what we are—and what we have been doing;——for what intent we were sent into the world, and what kind of characters we were designed to act in it.

It is necessary, that the mind of man, at some certain periods, should be prepared to enter into this account; and, without some such discipline, to check the insolence of unrestrained appetites, and call home the conscience,——the soul of man, capable as it is of brightness and perfection, would sink down to the lowest depths of darkness and brutality.——However true this is,——there still appears no obligation to renounce the innocent delights of our beings, or to affect a sullen distaste against them;——nor, in truth, can even the supposition of it be well admitted:———For pleasures arising from the free and natural exercise of the faculties of the mind and body, to talk them down, is like talking against the frame and mechanism of human nature, and would be no less senseless than the disputing against the burning of fire, or falling downwards of a stone. Besides this,——man is so contrived, that he stands in need of frequent repairs;—both mind and body are apt to sink and grow inactive under long and close attention; and, therefore, must be restored by proper recruits.——Some part of our

time may doubtless innocently and lawfully be employed in actions merely diverting;—and whenever such indulgencies become criminal, it is seldom the nature of the actions themselves,—but the excess, which makes them so.

But some one may here ask,—By what rule are we to judge of excess in these cases?——If the enjoyment of the same sort of pleasures may be innocent or guilty, according to the use or abuse of them,——how shall we be certified where the boundaries lie?——or be speculative enough to know how far we may go with safety?——I answer, there are very few who are not casuists enough to make a right judgment in this point.—For, since one principal reason, why God may be supposed to allow pleasure in this world, seems to be for the refreshment and recruit of our souls and bodies, which, like clocks, must be wound up at certain intervals,——every man understands so much of the frame and mechanism of himself, to know how and when to unbend himself, with such relaxations as are necessary to regain his natural vigor and cheerfulness, without which it is impossible he should either be in a disposition or capacity to discharge the several duties of his life.——Here then the partition becomes visible.

Whenever we pay this tribute to our appetites, any farther than is sufficient for the purposes for which it was first granted,——the action proportionably loses some share of its innocence. The surplusage of what is unnecessarily spent on such occasions, is so much of the little portion of our time negligently squandered, which, in prudence, we should apply better; because it was allotted us for more important uses, and a different account will be required of it at our hands hereafter.

For this reason, does it not evidently follow, that many actions and pursuits, which are irreproachable in their own natures, may be rendered

blameable and vicious, from this single consideration, "That they have made us wasteful of the "moments of this short and uncertain fragment "of life, which should be almost one of our last "prodigalities, since of them all, the least retriev-"able."——Yet how often is diversion, instead of amusement and relaxation, made the art and business of life itself?—Look round,—what policy and contrivance is every day put in practice, for pre-engaging every day in the week, and parcelling out every hour of the day for one idleness or another,—for doing nothing,—or something worse than nothing; and that with so much ingenuity, as scarce to leave a minute upon their hands to reproach them?—Though we all complain of the shortness of life,—yet how many people seem quite overstocked with the days and hours of it, and are continually sending out into the high-ways and streets of the city, for guests to come and take it off their hands?——If some of the more distressful objects of this kind were to sit down and write a bill of their time, though partial as that of the unjust steward, when they found in reality, that the whole sum of it, for many years, amounted to little more than this,—that they had rose up to eat,—to drink, to play,—and had laid down again, merely because they were fit for nothing else:—When they looked back and beheld this fair space, capable of such heavenly improvements,—all scrawled over and defaced with a succession of so many unmeaning cyphers,—good God!—how would they be ashamed and confounded at the account?

With what reflections will they be able to support themselves in the decline of a life so miserably cast away,——should it happen, as it sometimes does—that they have stood idle even unto the eleventh hour?————We have not always power, and are not always in a temper, to impose

upon ourselves. When the edge of appetite is worn down, and the spirits of youthful days are cooled, which hurried us on in a circle of pleasure and impertinence, then reason and reflection will have the weight which they deserve;——afflictions or the bed of sickness, will supply the place of conscience;—and, if they should fail,—old age will overtake us at last,——and show us the past pursuits of life,—and force us to look upon them in their true point of view.——If there is any thing more to cast a cloud upon so melancholy a prospect as this shows us,—it is surely the difficulty and hazard of having all the work of the day to perform in the last hour;—of making an atonement to GOD, when we have no sacrifice to offer him, but the dregs and infirmities of those days, when we could have no pleasure in them.

How far GOD may be pleased to accept such late and imperfect services, is beyond the intention of this discourse. Whatever stress some may lay upon it,——a death-bed repentance is but a weak and slender plank to trust our all upon.—Such as it is; to that, and GOD's infinite mercies, we commit them, who will not employ that time and opportunity he has given, to provide a better security.

That we may all make a right use of the time allotted us,—GOD grant, through the merits of his Son JESUS CHRIST. *Amen.*

SERMON XXXVIII.

On Enthusiasm.

ST. JOHN XV. 5.

For without me ye can do nothing.

OUR SAVIOUR, in the former part of the verse having told his disciples,—That he was the ne, and that they were only branches ;——inti- ating, in what a degree their good fruits, as ll as the success of all their endeavors, were depend upon his communications with them ; —he closes the illustration with the inference om it, in the words of the text,——For without e, ye can do nothing. In the 11th chapter to e Romans, where the manner is explained, in ich a christian stands by faith,——there is a e illustration made use of, and probably with an e to this,—where St. Paul instructs us,——that good man stands as the branch of a wild olive es, when it is grafted into a good olive tree :— nd that is——it flourishes, not through its own rtue, but in virtue of the root,——and such a ot as is naturally not its own.

It is very remarkable in that passage,——that e apostle calls a bad man a wild olive *tree* ;— t barely a branch, (as in the other case,) but a ee,....which, having a root of its own, supports elf, and stands in its own strength, and brings rth its own fruit——And so does every bad man, respect of the wild and sour fruit of a vicious d corrupt heart.——According to the resem- ance,——if the apostle intended it,——he is a ee,——has a root of his own,....and fruitfulness, ch as it is, with a power to bring it forth with- t help. But in respect of religion, and the mo- l improvements of virtue and goodness,——the postle calls us, and reason tells us, we are no ore than a branch ; and all our fruitfulness, and

all our support, depend so much upon the influence and communications of GOD,....that without him we can do nothing,——as our SAVIOUR declares in the text. There is scarce any point in our religion, wherein men have run into such violent extremes, as in the senses given to this, and such like declarations in scripture, of our sufficiency being of GOD;——some understanding them so, as to leave no meaning at all in them;.....others,—too much:...The one interpreting the gifts and influences of the Spirit, so as to destroy the truth of all such promises and declarations in the gospel;——the other carrying their notions of them so high, as to destroy the reason of the gospel itself,——and render the christian religion, which consists of sober and consistent doctrines, —the most intoxicated,—the most wild and unintelligible institution, that ever was in the world.

This being premised, I know not how I can more seasonably engage your attention this day, than by a short examination of each of these errors;—in doing which, as I shall take some pains to reduce both the extremes of them to reason, it will necessarily lead me, at the same time, to mark the safe and true doctrine of our church, concerning the promised influences and operations of the spirit of GOD upon our hearts;—which, however depreciated through the first mistake, or boasted of beyond measure through the second,—must nevertheless, be so limited and understood, as, on one hand, to make the gospel of CHRIST consistent with itself, and on the other, to make it consistent with reason and common sense.

If we consider the many express declarations, wherein our SAVIOUR tells his followers, before his crucifixion,——That GOD would send his spirit the Comforter amongst them, to supply his place in their hearts;—and as in the text,—that without him they could do nothing: If we conceive

them as spoken to his disciples with an immediate view to the emergencies they were under, from their *natural* incapacities of finishing the great work he had left them, and building upon that large foundation he had laid; without some extraordinary help and guidance to carry them thro', —no one can dispute that evidence and confirmation which was afterwards given of its truth; as our LORD's disciples were illiterate men, consequently unskilled in the arts and acquired ways of persuasion.——Unless this want had been supplied,——the first obstacle to their labors must have discouraged and put an end to them for ever. As they had no language but their own, without the gift of tongues, they could not have preached the gospel except in Judea;——and as they had no authority of their own,——without the supernatural one of signs and wonders, they could not vouch for the truth of it beyond the limits where it was first transacted. In this work, doubtless, all their sufficiency and power of acting was immediately from GOD;—his holy spirit, as he had promised them, so it gave them, a mouth and wisdom which all their adversaries were not able to gainsay or resist. So that, without him,—without these extraordinary gifts, in the most literal sense of the words, they *could* do nothing.——But besides this plain application of the text, to those particular persons and times, when GOD's spirit was poured down in that signal manner held sacred to this day,—there is something in them to be extended farther, which christians of all ages,—and I hope of all denominations, have still a claim and trust in,—— and that is, the ordinary assistance and influences of the Son of GOD in our hearts, for moral and virtuous improvements;——these, both in their natures as well as intentions, being altogether different from the others above mentioned, conferred

upon the disciples of our LORD. The one were miraculous gifts,—in which the endowed person contributed nothing, which advanced human nature above itself, and raised all its projectile springs above their fountains; enabling them to speak and act such things, and in such manner, as was impossible for men not inspired, and preternaturally upheld. In the other case, the helps spoken of were the influences of GOD's spirit, which upheld us from falling below the dignity of our nature:—That divine assistance which graciously kept us from falling, and enabled us to perform the holy professions of our religion.—Though these are equally called spiritual gifts,—they are not, as in the first case, the entire works of the spirit,——but the calm co-operations of it without our own endeavors; and are ordinarily what every sincere and well disposed christian has reason to pray for, and expect, from the same fountain of strength, who has promised to give his holy spirit to them that ask it.

From this point, which is the true doctrine of our church,—the two parties begin to divide both from it and each other;—each of them equally misapplying these passages of scripture, and wresting them to extremes equally pernicious.—

To begin with the first; of whom, should you inquire the explanation and meaning of this, or of other texts,—wherein the assistance of GOD's grace and holy spirit is implied as necessary to sanctify our nature, and enable us to serve and please GOD?———they will answer,—That no doubt all our parts and abilities are the gifts of GOD,——who is the original author of our nature, and, of consequence, of all that belongs thereto.—'That as by him we live, and move, and have 'our being,'——we must, in course, depend upon him for all our actions whatsoever,—since we must depend upon him even for our life, and for

every moment of its continuance.—That, from this view of our state and natural dependance, it is as certain, they will say,—We can do nothing without his help.—But then they will add,—that it concerns us no farther as *christians*, than as we are *men*;—the sanctity of our lives, the religious habits and improvements of our hearts, in no other sense depending upon GOD, than the most indifferent of our actions, or the natural exercise of any of the other powers he has given us.—— Agreeably with this,—that the spiritual gifts spoken of in scripture, are to be understood by way of accommodation, to signify the natural or acquired gifts of a man's mind,—such as memory, fancy, wit, and eloquence,—which, in a strict and philosophical sense, may be called spiritual,—— because they transcend the mechanical powers of matter,—and proceed more or less from the rational soul, which is a spiritual substance.

Whether these ought, in propriety, to be called spiritual gifts, I should not contend, as it seems a mere dispute about words;—but it is enough that the interpretation cuts the knot, instead of untying it; and besides, explains away all kind of meaning in the above promises. And the error of them, seems to arise, in the first place, from not distinguishing that these spiritual gifts,—if they must be called so,—such as memory, fancy, and wit, and other endowments of the mind, which are known by the name of natural parts, belong merely to us as men; and whether the different degrees, by which we excel each other in them, arise from a natural difference of our souls,—or a happier disposition of the organical parts of us. They are such however, as GOD originally bestows upon us, and with which, in a great measure, we are sent into the world. But the moral gifts of the Holy Ghost,—which are more commonly called the fruits of the spirit—cannot be confined within this description.——We come

not into the world equipped with virtues, as we do with talents;—if we did, we should come into the world with that which robbed virtue of its best title, both to present commendation, and future rewards. The gift of continency depends not, as these affirm, upon a mere coldness of the constitution—or patience and humility from an insensibility of it;—but they are virtues insensibly wrought in us by the endeavors of our own wills and concurrent influences of a gracious agent;—and the religious improvements arising from thence, are so far from being the effects of nature, and a fit disposition of the several parts and organical powers given us,—that the contrary is true;—namely,—that the stream of our affections and appetites, but too naturally carries us the other way.—For this, let any man lay his hand upon his heart, and reflect what has passed within him, in the several conflicts of meekness,—temperance,—chastity,—and other self-denials,—and he will need no better argument for his conviction.———

This hint leads to the true answer to the above misinterpretation of the text,—That we depend upon GOD in no other sense for our virtues,—than we necessarily do for every thing else; and that the fruits of the spirit are merely the determinations and efforts of our own reason,—and as much our own accomplishments, as any other improvements are the effect of our own diligence and industry.

This account, by the way, is opposite to the apostle's;—who tells us,—It is GOD that worketh in us, both to do and will, of his good pleasure.—It is true, though we are born ignorant,—we can make ourselves skilful;—we can acquire arts and sciences by our own application and study.—But the case is not the same in respect of goodness.—We can acquire arts and sciences, because we

lie under no natural indisposition or backwardness, to that acquirement.—For nature, though it be corrupt, yet still it is curious and busy after knowledge.—But it does not appear, that, to goodness and sanctity of manners, we have the same natural propensity.——Lusts within, and temptations without, set up so strong a confederacy against it, as we are never able to surmount by our own strength.—However firmly we may think we stand,—the best of us are but upheld and graciously kept upright; and whenever this divine assistance is withdrawn,—or suspended,—all history, especially the sacred, is full of melancholy instances of what man is, when God leaves him to himself,——that he is even a thing of nought.

Whether it was from a conscious expereince of this truth in themselves,—or some traditions handed from the scripture account of it;—or that it was, in some measure, deducible from the principles of reason:—In the writings of some of the wisest of the heathen philosophers, we find the strongest traces of the persuasion of God's assisting men to virtue and probity of manners.—One of the greatest masters of reasoning amongst the ancients, acknowledges that nothing great and exalted can be achieved, *sine divino afflatu*;—and Seneca to the same purpose, *nulla mens bona sine deo*;—that no soul can be good without divine assistance. Now, whatever comments may be put upon such passages in their writings,—it is certain those in scripture can receive no other, to be consistent with themselves, than what has been given.—And though, in vindication of human liberty, it is as certain, on the other hand,—that education, precepts, examples, pious inclinations, and practical diligence, are great and meritorious advances towards a religious state;—yet the state itself is got and finished by God's grace, and the

concurrence of his spirit upon tempers thus happily predisposed,—and honestly making use of such fit means:—And unless thus much is understood from them,—the several expressions in scripture, where the offices of the Holy Ghost, conducive to this end, are enumerated,—such as cleansing, guiding, renewing, comforting, strengthening and establishing us,—are a set of unintelligible words, which may amuse, but can convey little light to the understanding.

This is all I have time left to say at present upon the first error of those, who, by too loose an interpretation of the gifts and fruits of the spirit, explain away the whole sense and meaning of them, and thereby render not only the promises, but the comforts of them too, of none effect.—Concerning which error, I have only to add this by way of extenuation of it,—that I believe the great and unedifying rout made about sanctification and regeneration, in the middle of the last century,—and the enthusiastic extravagancies into which the communications of the spirit have been carried by so many deluded or deluding people in this,—are two of the great causes which have driven many a sober man into the opposite extreme, against which I have argued.—Now, if the dread of savoring too much of religion in their interpretations has done this ill service,—let us inquire, on the other hand, whether the affectation of too *much* religion in the other extreme, has not misled others full as far from truth, and farther from the reason and sobriety of the gospel, than the first.

I have already proved, by scripture arguments that the influence of the holy spirit of God is necessary to render the imperfect sacrifice of our obedience pleasing to our Maker.—He hath promised to "perfect his strength in our weakness."—With this assurance we ought to be satisfied;

especially since our SAVIOUR hath thought proper to mortify all scrupulous inquiries into operations of this kind, by comparing them to the wind, "which bloweth where it listeth; and thou hear-"est the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence "it cometh, or whither it goeth:—So is every "one that is born of the spirit."—Let humble gratitude acknowledge the effect, unprompted by an idle curiosity to explain the cause.

We are told, without this assistance, we can do nothing;—we are told, from the same authority, we can do all through CHRIST that strengthens us.—We are commanded to "work out our own sal-"vation with fear and trembling." The reason immediately follows; "for it is GOD that worketh "in you, both to will and to do, of his own good "pleasure."—From these, and many other repeated passages, it is evident, that the assistances of grace were not intended to destroy, but to cooperate with the endeavors of man,—and are derived from GOD, in the same manner as all natural powers.—Indeed, without this interpretation, how could the Almighty address himself to man as a rational being?—how could his actions be his own?—how could he be considered as a blamable or rewardable creature?

From this account of the consistent opinions of a sober minded christian, let us take a view of the mistaken enthusiast.—See him ostentatiously clothed with the outward garb of sanctity, to attract the eyes of the vulgar.—See a cheerful demeanor, the natural result of an easy and self-applauding heart, studiously avoided as a criminal.—See his countenance overspread with a melancholy gloom and despondence;—as if religion, which is evidently calculated to make us happy in this life as well as the next, was the parent of sullenness and discontent.—Hear him pouring forth his pharisaical ejaculations on his journey, or in the

streets.—Hear him boasting of extraordinary communications with the GOD of all knowledge, and, at the same time, offending against the common rules of his own native language, and the plainer dictates of common sense.—Hear him arrogantly thanking his GOD, that he is not as other men are; and, with more than papal uncharitableness, very liberally allotting the portion of the damned, to every christian whom he, partial judge, deems less perfect than himself—to every christian who is walking on in the paths of duty with sober vigilance, aspiring to perfection by progressive attainments, and seriously endeavoring, through a rational faith in the Redeemer, to make his calling and election sure.

There have been no sects in the christian world, however absurd, which have not endeavored to support their opinions by arguments drawn from scripture, misinterpreted or misapplied.

We had a melancholy instance of this in our own country, in the last century,——when the church of CHRIST as well as the government, during that period of national confusion, was torn asunder into various sects and factions;—when some men pretended to have scripture precepts, parables or prophecies, to plead, in favor of the most impious absurdities that falshood could advance. The same spirit which prevailed amongst the fanatics, seems to have gone forth among these modern enthusiasts.—Faith, the distinguishing characteristic of a christian, is defined by them, not as a rational assent of the understanding, to truths which are established by indisputable authority, but as a violent persuasion of mind, that they are instantaneoutly become the children of GOD—that the whole score of their sins is for ever blotted out without the payment of one tear of repentance:—Pleasing doctrine this to the fears and passions of mankind!—promising

fair to gain proselytes of the vicious and impenitent.

Pardons and indulgencies are the great support of papal power;—but these modern empirics in religion have improved upon the scheme,—pretending to have discovered an infallible *nostrum* for all incurables,—such as will preserve them for ever;—and notwithstanding we have instances of notorious offenders among the warmest advocates for sinless perfection,—the charm continues powerful.—Did these visionary notions of an heated imagination tend only to amuse the fancy, they might be treated with contempt;—but when they depreciate all moral attainments;—when the suggestions of a frantic brain are blasphemously ascribed to the holy spirit of GOD;—when faith and divine love are placed in opposition to practical virtues,—they then become the objects of aversion. In one sense, indeed, many of these deluded people demand our tenderest compassion,—whose disorder is in the head, rather than the heart;—and who call for the aid of a physician, who can cure the distempered state of the body, rather than one who may sooth the anxieties of the mind.

Indeed, in many cases, they seem so much above the skill of either,—that unless GOD, in his mercy, rebuke this spirit of enthusiasm which is gone out amongst us, no one can pretend to say, how far it may go, or what mischiefs it may do, in these kingdoms.——Already it has taught us as much blasphemous language,—and, if it goes on, by the samples given us in their journals, will fill us with as many legendary accounts of visions and revelations, as we have formerly had from the church of Rome. And for any security we have against it,—when time shall serve, it may as effectually convert the professors of it, even into popery itself,—consistent with their own princi-

ples ;—for, they have nothing more to do, than to say, that the spirit which inspired them, has signified, that the pope is inspired as well as they, and consequently is infallible.——After which, I cannot see how they can possibly refrain going to mass, consistent with their own principles.———

Thus much for these two opposite errors ;—the examination of which, has taken up so much time,—that I have little left to add, but to beg of GOD, by the assistance of his holy Spirit, to preserve us equally from both extremes, and enable us to form such right and worthy apprehensions of our holy religion,.....that it may never suffer, through the coolness of our conceptions of it, on one hand,—or the immoderate heat of them, on the other ;....but that we may at all times see it,....as it is, and as it was designed by its blessed Founder,.....as the most rational, sober, and consistent institution that could have been given to the sons of men.

NOW, to GOD, &c.

SERMON XXXIX.

Eternal Advantages of Religion.

ECCLES. xii. 13.

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter,—Fear GOD, *and keep his commandments: For this is the whole duty of man.*

THE wise man, in the beginning of this book, had proposed it as a grand query to be discussed, "To find out what was good for the sons "of men, which they should do under the heavens, "all the days of their lives?"—That is, what was the fittest employment, and the chief and proper business, which they should apply themselves to in this world.....And here, in the text, after a fair discussion of the question, he asserts it to be the business of religion,....the fearing GOD, and keeping his commandments.....This was the conclusion of the whole matter,....and the natural result of all his debates and inquiries.....And I am persuaded, the more observations we make upon the short life of man,....the more we experience,....and the longer trials we have of the world,....and the several pretentions it offers to our happiness;....the more we shall be engaged to think, like him,——that we can never find what we look for in any other thing which we do under the heavens, except in that of duty and obedience to GOD. In the course of the wise man's examination of this point, ...we find a great many beautiful reflections upon human affairs, all tending to illustrate the conclusion he draws; and as they are such as are apt to offer themselves to the thoughts of every serious and considerate man,....I cannot do better than renew the impressions,....by retouching the *principal arguments* of his discourse....before I

proceed to the general use and application of the whole.

In the former part of his book he had taken into his consideration those several states of life to which men usually apply themselves for happiness ;——first,—learning—wisdom ;——next,—mirth—jollity and pleasure ;—then,—power and greatness,—riches and possessions.....All of which are so far from answering the end for which they were at first pursued,——that, by a great variety of arguments,——he proves them severally to be so many "sore travels which GOD hath given to "the sons of men to be exercised therewith ;"—— and instead of being any, or all of them, our proper end and employment, or sufficient to our happiness,——he makes it plain, by a series of observations upon the life of man,.....that they are ever likely to end with others where they had done with him ;.....that is, in vanity and vexation of spirit.

Then he takes notice of the several accidents of life, which perpetually rob us of what little sweets the fruition of these objects might seem to promise us,...both with regard to our endeavors and our persons in this world.

1st, With regard to our endeavors,.....he shows that the most likely ways and means are not always effectual for the attaining of their end :..... That, in general,.....the utmost that hman counsels and prudence can provide for, is to take care, when they contend in a race, that they be swifter than those who run against them ;.....or when they are to fight a battle, that they be stronger than those whom they are to encounter.....And yet afterwards, in the ninth chapter, he observes, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong ;.....neither yet bread to the wise,..... nor yet riches to men of understanding,.....nor favor to men of skill ;.....but time and chance hap-

pens to them all.—That there are secret workings in human affairs, which over-rule all human contrivance, and counterplot the wisest of our counsels, in so strange and unexpected a manner, as to cast a damp upon our best schemes, and warmest endeavors.

And then, for those accidents to which our persons are as liable as our labors, he observes these three things ;—first, the natural infirmities of our bodies,—which alternately lay us open to the sad changes of pain and sickness ; which, in the fifth chapter, he styles wrath and sorrow ; under which when a man lies languishing, none of his worldly enjoyments will singnify much.—Like one that singeth songs with a heavy heart,—neither mirth, —nor power,—nor riches, shall afford him ease : —Nor will all their force be able to stay the stroke of nature,—"but that he shall be cut off in the "midst of his days, and then all his thoughts pe- "rish." Or else, what is no uncommon spectacle —in the midst of all his luxury,—he may waste away the greatest part of his life with much weariness and anguish ; and with the long torture of an unrelenting disease, he may wish himself to go down into the grave, and to be set at liberty from all his possessions, and all his misery, at the same time.

2dly, If it be supposed,—that by the strength of spirits, and the natural cheerfulness of a man's temper, he should escape these, "and live many "years, and rejoice in them all,"—which is not the lot of many ;—yet, "he must remember the "days of darkness ;"——that is,——they who devote themselves to a perpetual round of mirth and pleasure,—cannot so manage matters as to avoid the thoughts of their *future states*, and the anxiety about what shall become of them hereafter, when they are to depart out of this world ;———that they cannot so crowd their heads, and fill up their

time with other matters,—but that the remembrance of this will sometimes be uppermost,—and thrust itself upon their minds whenever they are retired and serious.—And as this will naturally present to them a dark prospect of their future happiness,—it must at the same time, prove no small damp and allay to what they would enjoy at present.

But, in the third place,—Suppose a man should be able to avoid sickness,—and to put the trouble of *these thoughts* likewise far from him,—yet there is something else which he cannot possibly decline; old age will unavoidably steal upon him,—with all the infirmities of it,—when (as he expresses it) "the grinders shall be few, and appe-"tite ceases,—when those who look out of the win-"dows shall be darkened, and the keepers of the "house shall tremble;"—when a man shall become a burden to himself, and to his friends;—when, perhaps, those of his nearest relations, whom he hath most obliged by kindness, shall think it time for him to depart, to creep off the stage, and make room for the succeeding generations.

And then, after a little funeral pomp of *mourners going about the streets*,—a man shall be buried out of the way, and in a year or two be as much forgotten, as if he had never existed.—For there is no remembrance (says he) of the wise more than the fool;—seeing that which now is, in the days to come, shall be forgotten; every day producing something which seems new and strange, to take up men's talk and wonder, and to drown the memory of former persons and actions.——

And I appeal to any rational man, whether these are not some of the most material reflections about human affairs,—which occur to every one who gives himself the least leisure to think about them?—Now, from all these premises put together, Solomon infers this short conclusion in the text,—

That to fear GOD, and keep his commandments, is the whole duty of man ;—that, to be serious in the matter of religion, and careful about our future states, is that which, after all our other experiments, will be found to be our chief happiness,—our greatest interest,—our greatest wisdom —and that which most of all deserves our care and application.—This must ever be the last result and the upshot of every wise man's observations upon all these transitory things, and upon the vanity of their several pretences to our well-being ; —and we may depend upon it, as an everlasting truth,—that we can never find what we seek for in any other course, or any other object,—but this one ;—and the more we know and think, and the more experience we have of the world, and of ourselves, the more we are convinced of this truth and led back by it to rest our souls upon that GOD from whence we came.—Every consideration upon the life of man tends to engage us to this point, —to be in earnest in the concernment of religion ;—to love and fear GOD ;—to provide for our true interest, and do ourselves the most effectual service,—by devoting ourselves to him,— and always thinking of him,—as he is the true and final happiness of a reasonable and an immortal spirit.

And indeed, one would think it next to impossible,—did not the commonness of the thing take off from the wonder,—that a man, who thinks at all—should let his whole life be a contradiction to such obvious reflections.

The vanity and emptiness of worldly goods and enjoyments,—the shortness and uncertainty of life,—the unalterable event hanging over our heads,—"that, in a few days, we must all of us "go to that place from whence we shall not re- "turn ;"—the certainty of this,—the uncertainty of the time when,—the immortality of the soul,—

the doubtful and momentous issues of eternity,—the terrors of damnation, and the glorious things which are spoken of the city of GOD,—are meditations so obvious, and so naturally check and block up a man's way,—are so very interesting, and, above all, so unavoidable,—that it is astonishing how it was possible, at any time, for mortal man to have his head full of any thing else.—— And yet, was the same person to take a view of the state of the world,—how slight an observation would convince him, that the wonder lay, in fact on the other side;—and that, as wisely as we all discourse and philosophize *de contemptu mundi et fuga sæculi*;—yet, for one who really acts in the world—consistent with his own reflections upon it,——there are multitudes who seem to take aim at nothing higher;—and, as empty a thing as it is,—are so dazzled with it, as to think it meet to build tabernacles of rest upon it,—and say, *It is good to be here.*——Whether, as an able inquirer into this paradox guesses,—whether it is, that men do not heartily believe such a thing as a future state of happiness and misery,—or, if they do, —that they do not actually and seriously consider it,—but suffer it to lie dormant and inactive within them,—and so are as little affected with it, as if, in truth, they believed it not;—or whether they look upon it through that end of the perspective which represents it as afar off,—and so are more forcibly drawn by the nearer, though the lesser loadstone;——whether these, or whatever other cause may be assigned for it,—the observation is incontestible, that the bulk of mankind, in passing through this vale of misery,—use it *not as a well* to refresh and allay,—but fully to quench and satisfy their thirst;—minding, or (as the apostle says) relishing earthly things,——making them the end and sum total of their desires and wishes, —and, in one word,—loving this world....just as

they are commanded to love GOD ;——that is,—*with all their heart, with all their soul*,—with all their mind and strength. But this is not the strongest part of this paradox. A man shall not only lean and rest upon the world with his whole stress,—but, in many instances, shall live notoriously bad and vicious :—When he is reproved, he shall seem convinced ;....when he is observed, he shall be ashamed ;....when he pursues his sin, he will do it in the dark ;....and when he has done it shall even be dissatisfied with himself :....Yet still, this shall produce no alteration in his conduct..... Tell him he shall one day die ;....or bring the event still nearer,....and show, that according to the course of nature, he cannot possibly live many years,....he will sigh, perhaps,....and tell you, he is convinced of that, as much as reason and experience can make him :....Proceed, and urge to him,....that after death comes judgment, and that he will certainly there be dealt with by a just GOD according to his actions ;....he will thank GOD he is no deist,....and tell you with the same grave face,....he is thoroughly convinced of that too ;....and as he believes,....no doubt, he trembles too :....And yet, after all, with all this conviction upon his mind, you will see him still persevere in the same course,....and commit his sin with as certain an event and resolution, as if he knew no argument against it.....These notices of things, however terrible and true, pass through his understanding as an eagle through the air, that leaves no path behind.

So that, upon the whole, instead of abounding with occasions to set us seriously on thinking,.... the world might dispense with many more calls of this kind ;....and were they seven times as many as they are,....considering what insufficient use we make of those we have, all, I fear, would be little enough to bring these things to our remem-

brance as often, and engage us to lay them to our hearts with that affectionate concern, which the weight and interest of them requires at our hands. ....Sooner or later, the most inconsiderate of us all will find, with Solomon,....that to do this effectually, is the whole duty of man.

And I cannot conclude this discourse upon his words, better, than with a short and earnest exhortation, that the solemnity of this season,....and the meditations to which it is devoted, may lead you up to the true knowledge and practice of the same point, of fearing GOD and keeping his commandments,....and convince you, as it did him, of the indispensible necessity of making that the business of a man's life, which is the chiefend of his being,....the eternal happiness and salvation of his soul.

Which may GOD grant, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST. *Amen.*

SERMON XL.

Asa: A Thanksgiving Sermon.

2. CHRON. XV. 14.

And they sware unto the LORD *with a loud voice, and with shouting, and with trumpets and with cornets.—And all the men of Judah rejoiced at the oath.*

IT will be necessary to give a particular account of what was the occasion, as well as the nature, of the oath which the men of Judah sware unto the Lord;—which will explain, not only the reasons why it became a matter of so much joy to them, but likewise admit of an application suitable to the purposes of this solemn assembly.

Abijah and Asa his son, were successive kings of Judah.—The first came to the crown at the close of a long, and, in the end, a very unsuccessful war, which had gradually wasted the strength and riches of his kingdom.

He was a prince endowed with the talents which the emergencies of his country required, and seemed born to make Judah a victorious, as well as a happy people—The conduct and great success of his arms against Jeroboam, had well established the first;—but his kingdom, which had been so many years the seat of war, had been so waisted and bewildered, that his reign good as it was, was too short to accomplish the latter.—He died, and left the work unfinished for his son.—Asa succeeded, in the room of Abijah his father, with the truest notions of religion and government that could be derived either from reason or experience.—His reason told him, that GOD should be worshipped in simplicity and singleness of heart;—therefore he took away the altars of the strange gods, and broke down their images.—His experience told him, that the most successful wars, instead of invigorating, more ge-

nerally drained away the vitals of government,—and, at the best, ended but in a brighter and more ostentatious kind of poverty and desolation ;——therefore he laid aside his sword, and studied the arts of ruling Judah with peace.——Conscience would not suffer Asa to sacrifice his subjects to private views of ambition,—and wisdom forbade he should suffer them to offer up themselves to the pretence of public ones ;—since enlargement of empire, by the destruction of its people, (the natural and only valuable source of strength and riches,) was a dishonest and miserable exchange.—And, however well the glory of a conquest might appear in the eyes of a common beholder, yet, when bought at that costly rate, a father to his country would behold the triumph which attended it, and weep as it passed by him.—Amidst all the glare and jollity of the day, the parent's eyes would fix attentively upon his child ;——he would discern him drooping under the weight of his attire, without strength or vigor, his former beauty and comeliness gone off :—He would behold the coat of many colors stained with blood, and cry,—Alas ! they have decked thee with a parent's pride, but not with a parent's care and foresight.

With such affectionate sentiments of government, and just principles of religion, Asa began his reign :—A reign marked out with new æras, and a succession of happier occurrences, than what had distinguished former days.

The just and gentle spirit of the prince insensibly stole into the breasts of the people.—The men of Judah turned their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks.——By industry and virtuous labor, they acquired, what by spoil and rapine they might have sought after long in vain.—The traces of their late troubles soon began to wear out.—The cities, which

had become ruinous and desolate (the prey of famine and the sword) were now rebuilt, fortified and made populous.———Peace, security, wealth and prosperity, seemed to compose the whole history of Asa's reign.—O Judah! what could then have been done more than what was done to make thy people happy?

What one blessing was withheld, that thou shouldest ever withhold thy thankfulness?——

That thou didst not continually turn thy eyes towards heaven with an habitual sense of God's mercies, and devoutly praise him for setting Asa over you?

Were not the public blessings, and the private enjoyments which every man of Judah derived from them, such as to make the continuance of them desirable?—and what other way was there to effect it, than to swear unto the Lord, with all your hearts and souls, to perform the covenant made with your fathers?—to secure that favor and interest with the almighty Being, without which the wisdom of this world is foolishness, and the best connected systems of human policy are speculative and airy projects, without foundation or substance.—The history of their own exploits and establishment since they had become a nation, was a strong confirmation of this doctrine.

But too free and uninterrupted a possession of God Almighty's blessings, sometimes (though it seems strange to suppose it) even tempts men to forget him,—either from a certain depravity and ingratitude of nature, not to be wrought upon by goodness,—or that they are made by it too passionately fond of the present hour, and too thoughtless of its great Author, whose kind providence brought it about.——This seemed to have been the case with the men of Judah:——For notwithstanding all that God had done for them, in

placing Abijah, and Asa his son, over them, and inspiring them with hearts and talents proper to retrieve the errors of the foregoing reign, and bring back peace and plenty to the dwellings of Judah ;—yet there appears no record of any solemn and religious acknowledgment to God for such signal favors.—The people sat down in a thankless security, each man under his vine, to eat and drink and rose up to play ;—more solicitous to enjoy their blessings, than to deserve them.

But this scene of tranquillity was not to subsist without some change ;—and it seemed as if providence at length had suffered the stream to be interrupted, to make them consider whence it flowed, and how necessary it had been all along to their support. The Ethiopians, ever since the beginning of Abijah's reign, until the tenth year of Asa's, had been at peace,—or at least, whatever secret enmity they bore, had made no open attacks upon the kingdom of Judah. And indeed the bad measures which Rehoboam had taken in the latter part of his reign which immediately preceded theirs, seemed to have saved the Ethiopians the trouble. For Rehoboam, though, in the former part of his reign he dealt wisely ; yet when he had established his kingdom, and strengthened himself,—he forsook the laws of the Lord ;—he forsook the counsel which the old men, gave him, and took counsel with the young men, which were brought up with him, and stood before him. Such ill advised measures, in all probability, had given the enemies of Judah such decisive advantages over her, that they had sat down contented, and for many years enjoyed the fruits of their acquisitions.—But the friendship of princes is seldom made up of better materials than those which are every day to be seen in private life,—in which, sincerity and affection are not at all considered as

ingredients. Change of time and circumstances, produces a change of counsels and behavior. Judah in length of time had become a fresh temptation, and was worth fighting for. Her riches and plenty might first make her enemies covet, and then the remembrance of how cheap and easy a prey she had formerly been, might make them not doubt of obtaining.

By these apparent motives, (or whether GOD, who sometimes overrules the heart of man, was pleased to turn them by secret ones, to the purposes of his wisdom) the ambition of the Ethiopians revived. With an host of men numerous as the sand upon the sea-shore in multitude,——— they had left their country, and were coming forwards to invade them.—What can Judah propose to do in so terrifying a crisis ?——where can she betake herself for refuge ?—On one hand, her religion and laws are too precious to be given up, or trusted to the hands of a stranger ;——— and, on the other hand, how can so small a kingdom, just recovering strength, surrounded by an army of a thousand thousand men, besides chariots and horses, be able to withstand so powerful a shock ?——But here it appeared, that those who, in their prosperity, can forget GOD, do yet remember him in the day of danger and distress ; ——and can begin with comfort to depend upon his providence, when with comfort they can depend upon nothing else. For when Zerah, the Ethiopian, was come unto the valley of Zephatha at Maretha, Asa, and all the men of Judah, and Benjamin, went out against him :—And as they went, they cried mightily unto GOD.——And Asa prayed for his people, and he said,——" O LORD ! it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many or with them that have no power ;—help us, O LORD our GOD, for we rest in thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude.——O LORD

thou art our GOD: Let not man prevail against thee." Success almost seemed a debt due to the piety of the prince, and the contrition of his people. So GOD smote the Ethiopians, and they could not recover themselves:——For they were scattered, and utterly destroyed,—before the Lord and before his host. And as they returned to Jerusalem from pursuing,—behold the spirit of GOD came upon Asariah the son of Oded. And he went out to meet Asa, and he said unto him,—Hear ye me Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin;—The LORD is with you, whilst you are with him;—and if you seek him, he will be found of you,—but if you forsake him, he will forsake you.—Nothing could more powerfully call home the conscience, than so timely an expostulation. The men of Judah and Benjamin struck with a sense of their late deliverance, and the many other felicities they had enjoyed since Asa was king over them, they gathered themselves together at Jerusalem, in the third month in the fifteenth year of Asa's reign;—and they entered into a covenant to seek the LORD GOD of their fathers, with all their heart, and with all their soul: And they sware unto the LORD with a loud voice, and with shouting, and with trumpets, and with cornets, and all Judah rejoiced at the oath.

One may observe a kind of luxuriety in the description which the holy historian gives of the transport of the men of Judah upon this occasion.—And sure, if ever matter of joy was so reasonably founded, as to excuse any excesses in the expressions of it,—this was one:—For without it,—the condition of Judah, though otherwise the happiest, would have been of all nations under heaven the most miserable.

Let us suppose a moment instead of being repulsed, that the enterprize of the Ethiopians had prospered against them;——like other grievous distempers, where the vitals are first attacked,—

Asa, their king, would have been sought after, and have been made the first sacrifice. He must either have fallen by the sword of battle or execution; or, what is worse, he must have survived the ruin of his country by flight,—and worn out the remainder of his days in sorrow for the afflictions which were come upon it. In some remote corner of the world, the good king would have heard the particulars of Judah's destruction. He would have been told how the country, which had become dear to him by his paternal care, was now utterly laid waste, and all his labor lost;—how the fences which protected it were torn up, and the tender plant within, which he had so long sheltered, was cruelly trodden under foot and devoured. He would hear how Zerah, the Ethiopian, when he had overthrown the kingdom, thought himself bound in conscience to overthrow the religion of it too, and established his own idolatrous one in its stead,—That, in pursuance of this, the holy religion, which Asa had reformed, had begun every where to be evil spoken of, and evil entreated:——

That it was first banished from the courts of the king's house, and the midst of Jerusalem,—and then fled for safety out of the way into the wilderness, and found no city to dwell in:—That Zerah had rebuilt the altars of the strange gods, which Asa's piety had broken down,——and set up their images:——

That his commandment was *urgent*, that all should fall down and worship the idol he had made:—That, to complete the tale of their miseries, there was no prospect of deliverance for any but the worst of his subjects,—those who, in his reign, had either leaned in their hearts towards these idolatries,—or whose principles and morals were such, that all religions suited them alike;—but that the honest and conscientious men of Judah, unable to behold such abominations,

hung down every man his head like a bulr
and put sackloth and ashes under him.

This picture of Judah's desolation, migl
some resemblance of what every one of Asa's
jects would probably form to himself, that da
solemnized an exemption from it. And the tu
port was natural,—To swear unto the LORD
a loud voice, and with shouting, and with t
pets and with cornets ;——to rejoice at the
which secured their future peace, and celebr
with all the external marks of gladness.

I have at length gone through the story, w
gave the occasion to this religious act whi
recorded of the men of Judah in the text.

I believe there is not one, in sacred script
that bids fairer for a parallel to our own ti
or that would admit of an application more s
ble to the solemnity of this day.

But men are apt to be struck with likeness
so different a manner, from the different p
of view in which they stand, as well as thei
versity of judgments, that it is generally a
unacceptable piece of officiousness to fix any
tain degrees of approach.

In this case it seems sufficient,—that those
will discern the least resemblance, will dis
enough to make them seriously comply with
devotion of the day ;——and that those who
affected with it in a stronger manner, and se
blessing of a protestant king in its fairest li
with all the mercies which made way for it,
have still more abundant reason to adore that
Being, who has all along protected it from
enemies which have risen up to do it violenc
but more especially, in a late instance, by tur
down the counsels of the froward headlong,
and confounding the devices of the crafty,—
that their hands could not perform their e
prize.——Though this event for many rea

will ever be told amongst the felicities of these days;——yet for none more so, than that it has given us a fresh mark of the continuation of GOD Almighty's favor to us:——A part of that great complicated blessing for which we are gathered together to return him thanks.

Let us, therefore, I beseech you, endeavor to do it in the way which becomes wise men, and that is, to pursue the intentions of his providence, in giving us the occasion—to become better men, and, by a holy and an honest conversation, make ourselves capable of enjoying what GOD has done for us.——in vain shall we celebrate the day with loud voice and with shouting, and with trumpets,—if we do not do it likewise with the internal and more certain marks of sincerity,—a reformation and purity in our manners. It is impossible a sinful people can either be grateful to GOD, or properly loyal to their prince. They cannot be grateful to the one because they live not under a sense of his mercies,—nor can they be loyal to the other because they daily offend in the two tenderest points which concern his welfare:——By first disengaging the providence of GOD from taking our part, and then giving a heart to our adversaries to lift their hands against us, who must know, that, if we forsake God, God will forsake us. Their hopes, their designs, their wickedness against us, can only be built upon ours towards GOD.

For if they did not think we did evil, they durst not hope we could perish.

Cease, therefore, to do evil;—for by following righteousness, you will make the hearts of your enemies faint, they will turn their backs against your indignation,——and their weapons will fall from their hands.

Which may GOD grant through the merits and mediation of his Son JESUS CHRIST, to whom be all honor, &c. *Amen.*

SERMON XLI.

Follow Peace.

HEBREWS xii. 14.

Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the LORD.

THE great end and design of our holy religion, next to the main view of reconciling us to GOD, was to reconcile us to each other ;——by teaching us to subdue all those unfriendly dispositions in our nature, which unfit us for happiness, and the social enjoyment of the many blessings which GOD has enabled us to partake of in this world, miserable as it is, in many respects.—— Could christianity persuade the professors of it into this temper, and engage us, as its doctrine requires, to go on and exalt our natures, and, after the subduction of the most unfriendly of our passions, to plant, in the room of them, all those (more natural to the soul) humane and benevolent inclinations, which, in imitation of the perfections of GOD, should dispose us to extend our love and goodness to our fellow creatures, according to the extent of our abilities,——IN like manner as the goodness of GOD extends itself over all the works of the creation :——Could this be accomplished, the world would be worth living in ;—and might be considered by us as a foretaste of what we should enter upon hereafter.

But such a system, you will say, is merely visionary ;—and, considering man as a creature so beset with selfishness, and other fretful passions that propensity prompts him to,—though it is to be wished, it is not to be expected.——But our religion enjoins us to approach as near this fair pattern as we can ; and, if it be possible, as much as lieth in us, to live peaceably with all men ;— where the term, *if possible*,—I own, implies it

may not only be difficult, but sometimes impossible.——Thus the words of the text,—Follow peace,—may by some be thought to imply,—that this desirable blessing may sometimes fly from us: —But still we are required to follow it, and not cease the pursuit, till we have used all warrantable methods to regain and settle it:—Because, adds the apostle, without this frame of mind, no man shall see the LORD. For heaven is the region, as well as the recompence, of peace and benevolence; and such as do not desire and promote it here, are not qualified to enjoy it hereafter.

For this cause, in scripture language,—peace is always spoke of as the great comprehensive blessing, which included in it all manner of happiness;——and, to wish peace to any house or person, was, in one word, to wish them all that was good and desirable.——Because happiness consists in the inward complacency and satisfaction of the mind; and he who has such a disposition of soul, as to acquiesce and rest contented with all the events of providence, can want nothing this world can give him,——Agreeable to this,—that short, but most comprehensive hymn, sung by angels at our SAVIOUR's birth, declaratory of the joy and happy ends of his incarnation,—after glory, in the first, to GOD,—the next note which sounded, was, peace upon earth, and good will to men.——It was a public wish of happiness to mankind, and implied a solemn charge to pursue the means that would ever lead to it.——And, in truth, the good tidings of the gospel are nothing else but a grand message and embassy of peace, to let us know, that our peace is made in heaven.

The prophet Isaiah styles our SAVIOUR the Prince of Peace, long before he came into the world; and, to answer the title, he made choice to enter into it at a time when all nations were at peace with each other; which was in the days of

Augustus,——when the temple of Janus was shut, and all the alarms of war were hushed and silenced throughout the world.——At his birth, the host of heaven descended, and proclaimed peace on earth, as the best state and temper the world could be in to receive and welcome the author of it. His future conversation and doctrine, here upon earth, was every way agreeable with his peaceable entrance upon it;—the whole course of his life being but one great example of meekness, peace and patience. At his death, it was the only legacy he bequeathed to his followers: ——My peace I give unto you.——How far this has taken place, or been actually enjoyed,—is not my intention to enlarge upon, any farther than just to observe how precious a bequest it was, from the many miseries and calamities which have, and ever will, ensue from the want of it. If we look into the larger circle of the world;—what desolations, dissolutions of government, and invasions of property,——what rapine, plunder, and profanation of the most sacred rights of mankind, are the certain unhappy effects of it;——fields dyed in blood, the cries of orphans and widows, bereft of their best help, too fully instruct us.—Look into private life;——and behold how good and pleasant a thing it is to live together in unity; ——it is like the precious ointment poured upon the head of Aaron, that run down to his skirts; ——importing, that this balm of life is felt and enjoyed, not only by governors of kingdoms, but is derived down to the lowest rank of life, and tasted in the most private recesses;—all, from the king to the peasant, are refreshed with its blessings, without which, we can find no comfort in any thing this world can give.——It is this blessing gives every one to sit quietly under his vine, and reap the fruits of his labor and industry,—in one word——which bespeaks who is the

bestower of it.——It is that only which keeps up the harmony and order of the world, and preserves every thing in it from ruin and confusion.

There is one saying of our SAVIOUR's, recorded by St. Matthew, which, at first sight, seems to carry some opposition to this doctrine;—I came not to send peace on earth, but a sword.——But this reaches no farther than the bare words, not entering so deep as to affect the sense, or imply any contradiction:—Intimating only,——that the preaching of the gospel, will prove, in the event, through sundry unhappy causes,—such as prejudices, the corruption of mens hearts, a passion for idolatry and superstition,—the occasion of much variance and division even amongst nearest relations;—yea, and oft times of bodily death, and many calamities and persecutions, which actually ensued upon the first preachers and followers of it. Or the words may be understood,—as a beautiful description of the inward contests and opposition which christianity would occasion in the heart of man,——from its oppositions to the violent passions of our nature,——which would engage us in a perpetual warfare. This was not only a sword,—a division betwixt nearest kindred;—but it was dividing a man against himself; setting up an opposition to an interest long established,—strong by nature,—more so by uncontroled custom.—— This is verified, every hour, in the struggles for mastery betwixt the principles of the world, the flesh, and the devil;—which set up so strong a confederacy, that there is need of all the helps which reason and christianity can offer to bring them down.

But this contention is not that against which such exhortations in the gospel are levelled;—for the scripture must be interpreted by scripture, and be made consistent with itself.——And we find, the distinguishing mark and doctrine, by

which all men were to know who were Christ's disciples,—was that benevolent frame of mind towards all our fellow creatures, which, by itself, is a sufficient security for the particular social duty here recommended:——So far from meditations of war——for love thinketh no evil to his neighbor;——so far from doing any, it harbors not the least thought of it; but, on the contrary, rejoices with them that rejoice, and weeps with them that weep.

This debt christianity has highly exalted; tho' it is a debt that we were sensible of before, and acknowledged to be owed to human nature,—— which, as we allpartake of,—so ought we to pay it in a suitable respect. For, as men, we are allied together in the natural bond of brotherhood, and are members one of another.———We have the same Father in heaven, who made us, and takes care of us all. Our earthly extraction too, is nearer alike, than the pride of the world cares to be reminded of:—For Adam was the father of us all, and Eve the mother of all living.——— The prince and the beggar sprung from the same stocks, as wide asunder as the branches are.—— So that, in this view, the most upstart family may vie antiquity, and compare families with the greatest monarchs.—We are all formed too, of the same mould, and must equally return to the same dust.———So that, to love our neighbor, and live quietly with him, is to live at peace with ourselves.—He is but self-multiplied, and enlarged into another form; and to be unkind or cruel to him, is but, as Solomon observes of the unmerciful, to be cruel to our own flesh.——As a farther motive and engagement to this peaceable commerce with each other,——God has placed us all in one another's power by turns,——in a condition of mutual need and dependance.——There is no man so liberally stocked with earthly bles-

sings, as to be able to live without another man's aid.——God, in his wisdom, has so dispensed his gifts, in various kinds and measures, as to render us helpful, and make a social intescourse indispensible.——The prince depends on the labor and industry of the peasant;——and the wealth and honor of the greatest persons, are fed and supported from the same source.

This the apostle hath elegantly set forth to us, by the familiar resemblance of the natural body; wherein there are many members, and all have not the same office; but the different faculties and operations of each, are for the use and benefit of the whole.—The eye sees not for itself, but for the other members;—and is set up as a light to direct them:——The feet serve to support and carry about the other parts; and the hands act and labor for them all. It is the same in states and kingdoms, wherein there are many members, yet each in their several functions and employments; which, if peaceably discharged, are for the harmony of the whole state.—Some are eyes and guides to the blind;—others, feet to the lame and impotent;——some supply the place of the head, to assist with counsel and direction;——others the hands, to be useful by their labor and industry. To make this link of dependence still stronger,—there is a great portion of mutability in all human affairs, to make benignity of temper not only our duty, but our interest and wisdom. There is no condition in life so fixed and permanent as to be out of danger, or the reach of change:—— And we all may depend upon it, that we shall take our turns of wanting and desiring. By how many unforeseen causes may riches take wing!—— The crowns of princes may be shaken; and the greatest that ever awed the world have experienced what the turn of the wheel can do. That which hath happened to one man, may befal another;

and, therefore, that excellent rule of our Saviour's ought to govern us in all our actions,——Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do you also to them likewise. Time and chance happens to all,—and the most affluent may be stripped of all, and find his worldly comforts like so many withered leaves dropping from him.—— Sure nothing can better become us, than hearts so full of our dependance, as to overflow with mercy, and pity, and good-will towards mankind.—— To exhort us to this, is, in other words, to exhort us to follow peace with all men:——The first is the root,——this the fair fruit and happy product of it.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, in the bowels of mercy, let us put away anger, and malice, and evil-speaking;——let us fly all clamor and strife;——let us be kindly affected one to another,—following peace with all men, and holiness,—— that we may see the LORD.

Which, GOD of his infinite mercy grant, thro' the merits of his Son, our LORD and SAVIOUR.—*Amen.*

SERMON XLII.

Search the Scriptures.

ST. JOHN V. 39.

Search the Scriptures.

THAT things of the most inestimable use and value, for want of due application and study laid out upon them, may be passed by unregarded, nay, even looked upon with coldness and aversion, is a truth too evident to need enlarging on —Nor is it less certain, that prejudices, contracted by an unhappy education, will sometimes so stop up all the passages to our hearts, that the most amiable objects can never find access, or bribe us by all their charms into justice and impartiality.— It would be passing the tenderest reflection upon the age we live in, to say it is owing to one of these, that those inestimable books, the sacred writings, meet so often with a disrelish (what makes the accusation almost incredible) amongst persons who set up for men of taste and delicacy; who pretend to be charmed with what they call beauties and nature in classical authors, and in other things would blush not to be reckoned amongst sound and impartial critics.—But so far has negligence and prepossession stopped their ears against the voice of the charmer, that they turn over those awful sacred pages with inattention and an unbecoming indifference, unaffected amidst ten thousand sublime and noble passages, which, by the rules of sound criticism and reason, may be demonstrated to be truly eloquent and beautiful.

Indeed, the opinion of false Greek and barbarous language in the Old and New Testament, had, for some ages, been a stumbling-block to another set of men, who were professedly great readers and admirers of the ancients.—The sacred writings were, by these persons, rudely attacked

on all sides: Expressions which came not within the compass of their learning, were branded with barbarism and solecism; words which scarce signified any thing, but the ignorance of those who laid such groundless charges on them. Presumptuous man!—Shall he, who is but dust and ashes, dare to find fault with the words of that Being, who first inspired man with language, and taught his mouth to utter; who opened the lips of the dumb, and made the infant eloquent?——These persons, as they attacked the inspired writings on the foot of critics and men of learning, accordingly have been treated as such: And though a shorter way might have been gone to work, which was,——that as their accusations reached no farther than the bare words and phraseology of the bible,—they in nowise affected the sentiments and soundness of the doctrines, which were conveyed with as much clearness and perspicuity to mankind, as they could have been, had the language been written with the utmost elegance and grammatical nicety. And even though the charge of barbarous idioms could be made out;—yet the cause of christianity was thereby nowise affected, but remained just in the state they found it.—— Yet, unhappily for them, they even miscarried in their favorite point;——there being few, if any at all, of the scripture expressions, which may not be justified by numbers of parallel modes of speaking, made use of amongst the purest and most authentic Greek authors.——This, an able hand amongst us, not many years ago, has sufficiently made out, and thereby baffled and exposed all their presumptuous and ridiculous assertions.— These persons, bad and deceitful as they were, are yet far outgone by a third set of men.—I wish we had not too many instances of them, who, like foul stomachs, that turn the sweetest food to bitterness, upon all occasions endeavor to make

merry with sacred scripture, and turn every thing they meet with therein into banter and burlesque. ——But as men of this stamp, by their excess of wickedness and weakness together, have entirely disarmed us from arguing with them as reasonable creatures, it is not only making them too considerable, but likewise to no purpose to spend much time about them; they being, in the language of the apostle, creatures of no understanding, speaking evil of things they know not, and shall utterly perish in their own corruption.—Of these two last, the one is disqualified for being argued with, and the other has no occasion for it; they being already silenced.—Yet those that were first mentioned, may not altogether be thought unworthy of our endeavors;—being persons, as was hinted above, who, tho' their tastes are so far vitiated that they cannot relish the sacred scriptures, yet have imaginations capable of being raised by the fancied excellencies of classical writers....And indeed, these persons claim from us some degree of pity, when, thro' the unskilfulness of preceptors in their youth, or some other unhappy circumstance in their education, they have been taught to form false and wretched notions of good writing. ——When this is the case, it is no wonder they should be more touched and affected with the dressed-up trifles and empty conceits of poets and rhetoricians, than they are with that true sublimity and grandeur of sentiment which glow throughout every page of the inspired writings. By way of information, such should be instructed.——

There are two sorts of eloquence; the one, indeed, scarce deserves the name of it, which consists chiefly in labored and polished periods, an over-curious and artificial arrangement of figures, tinselled over with a gaudy embelishment of words which glitter, but convey little or no light to the understanding.—This kind of writing is, for the

most part, much affected and admired by people of weak judgment and vicious taste, but is a piece of affectation and formality the sacred writers are utter strangers to.—It is a vain and boyish eloquence; and as it has always been esteemed below the great geniuses of all ages, so, much more so, with respect to those writers who were actuated by the spirit of infinite wisdom, and therefore wrote with that force and majesty with which never man writ.——The other sort of eloquence is quite the reverse of this, and which may be said to be the true characteristic of the holy scriptures; where the excellence does not arise from a labored and far-fetched elocution, but from a surprising mixture of simplicity and majesty,—which is a double character, so difficult to be united, that it is seldom to be met with in compositions merely human.—We see nothing in holy writ, of affectation and superfluous ornament.—As the infinite wise Being has condescended to stoop to our language, thereby to convey to us the light of revelation,—so has he been pleased graciously to accommodate it to us with the most natural and graceful plainness it would admit of.—Now, it is observable, that the most excellent profane authors, whether Greek or Latin, lose most of their graces, whenever we find them literally translated. —Homer's famed representation of Jupiter, in his first book;—his cried up description of a tempest ——his relation of Neptune's shaking the earth, and opening it to its centre;—his description of Pallas's horses; with numbers of other long-since admired passages,——flag, and almost vanish away, in the vulgar Latin translation.

Let any one but take the pains to read the common Latin interpretation of Virgil,—Theocritus or even of Pindar, and one may venture to affirm, he will be able to trace out but few remains of the graces which charmed him so much in the origi-

nal.——The natural conclusion from hence,is,that in the classical authors, the expression, the sweetness of the numbers, occasioned by a musical placing of words, constitute a great part of their beauties ;—whereas, in the sacred writings, they consist more in the greatness of the things themselves, than in the words and expressions. The ideas and conceptions are so great and lofty in their own nature,that they necessarily appear magnificent in the most artless dress.—Look but into the bible, and we see them shine thro' the most simple and literal translations.—That glorious description which Moses gives of the creation of the heavens and the earth, which Longinus, the best critic the eastern world ever produced, was so justly taken with, has not lost the least whit of its intrinsic worth ; and tho' it has undergone so many translations, yet triumphs over all, and breaks forth with as much force and vehemence as in the original—Of this stamp are numbers of passages throughout the scriptures ;——instance that celebrated description of a tempest, in the hundred and seventh psalm ;—those beautiful reflections of holy Job, upon the shortness of life, and instability of human affairs,so judiciously appointed by our church,in her office for the burial of the dead ;—that lively description of a horse of war, in the thirty-ninth chapter of Job, in which, from the 19th to 26th verse, there is scarce a word which does not merit a particular explication, to display the beauties of.—I might add to these,those tender and pathetic expostulations which the children of Israel, which run throughout all the prophets, which the most uncritical reader can scarce help being affected with.

And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard.—What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done ?——where-

fore when I expected it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?—and yet, ye say, the way of the LORD is unequal. Hear now, O house of Israel,—is not my way equal?—are not your ways unequal;——have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die, and not that he should return from his ways and live?—I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.—The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib,—but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.—There is nothing in all the eloquence of the heathen world, comparable to the vivacity and tenderness of these reproaches;—there is something in them so thoroughly affecting, and so noble and sublime withal, that one might challenge the writings of the most celebrated orators of antiquity, to produce any thing like them. These observations upon the superiority of the inspired penmen to heathen ones, in that which regards the composition, more conspicuously hold good when they are considered upon the foot of historians.——Not to mention that profane histories give an account only of human achievements and temporal events, which, for the most part, are so full of uncertainty and contradictions, that we are at a loss where to seek for truth;——but that the sacred history is the history of GOD himself,—the history of his omnipotence and infinite wisdom, his universal providence, [illegible] justice and mercy, and all his other attributes displayed under a thousand different forms, by a series of the most various and wonderful events that ever happened to any nation, or language.——Not to insist upon this visible superiority in sacred history,—there is yet another undoubted excellence the profane historians seldom arrive at, which is almost the distinguishing character of the sacred ones; namely, that unaffected, artless manner of relating historical facts,

——which is so entirely of a piece with every other part of the holy writings. What I mean will be best made out by a few instances.—In the history of Joseph, (which certainly is told with the greatest variety of beautiful and affecting circumstances) when Joseph makes himself known, and weeps aloud upon the neck of his dear brother Benjamin, that all the house of Pharaoh heard him;——at that instant, none of his brethren are introduced as uttering aught, either to express their present joy, or paliate their former injuries to him. On all sides, there immediately ensues a deep and solemn silence;—a silence infinitely more eloquent and expressive, than any thing else that could have been substituted in its place.—Had Thucydides, Herodotus, Livy, or any of the celebrated classical historians, been employed in writing this history,—when they came to this point, they would, doubtless, have exhausted all their fund of eloquence in furnishing Joseph's brethren with labored and studied harangues; which, however fine they might have been in themselves, would nevertheless have been unnatural, and altogether improper on the occasion. For, when such a variety of contrary passions broke in upon them,——what tongue was able to utter their hurried and distracted thoughts?——When remorse, surprize, shame, joy, and gratitude, struggled together in their bosoms, how uneloquently would their lips have performed their duty?—how unfaithfully their tongues have spoken the language of their hearts?——in this case, silence was truly eloquent and natural, and tears expressed what oratory was incapable of.

If ever these persons I have been addressing myself to, can be persuaded to follow the advice in the text, of searching the scriptures,——the work of their salvation will be begun upon its true foundation.——For, first, they will insensibly be

led to admire the beautiful propriety of their language:——When a favorable opinion is conceived of this,—next, they will more closely attend to the goodness of the moral, and the purity and soundness of the doctrines.——The pleasure of reading will still be increased, by that near concern which they will find themselves to have in those many important truths, which they will see so clearly demonstrated in the bible, that grand charter of our eternal happiness.—It is the fate of mankind, too often, to seem insensible of what they may enjoy at the easiest rate.—What might not our neighboring Romish countries, who groan under the yoke of popish impositions and priest-craft,——what might not these poor misguided creatures give, for the happiness which we knew not how to value,—of being born in a country where a church is established by our laws, and encouraged by our princes,—which not only allows the free study of the scriptures, but even exhorts and invites us to it;——a church that is a stranger to the tricks and artifice of having the bible in an unknown tongue, to give the greater latitude to the designs of the clergy, in imposing their own trumpery, and foisting in whatever may best serve to aggrandize themselves, or enslave the wretches committed to their trust.—In short, our religion was not given us to raise our imaginations with ornaments of words, or strokes of eloquence; but to purify our hearts, and lead us into the paths of righteousness.——However, not to defend ourselves,—when the attack is principally levelled at this point,—might give occasion to our adversaries to triumph, and charge us either with negligence or inability.——It is well known how willing the enemies of our religion are to seek occasions against us;—how ready to magnify every mote in our eyes to the bigness of a beam;——how eager, upon the least default,

to insult and cry out,——There, there! so would we have it:——Not, perhaps, that we are so much the subject of malice and aversion, but that the licentious age seems bent upon bringing christianity into discredit at any rate; and, rather than miss the aim, would strike thro' the sides of those that are sent to teach it.———Thank GOD, the truth of our holy religion is established with such strong evidence, that it rests upon a foundation never to be overthrown, either by the open assaults, or cunning devices, of wicked and designing men.—The part we have to act, is, to be steady, sober, and vigilant; to be ready to do every good work; to reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with all long-suffering; to give occasion of offence to no man: That, with well-doing, we may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.

I shall close all with that excellent collect of our church:——

Blessed LORD, who hast caused all holy scriptures to be written for our learning,—grant that we may in suchwise hear them, read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them, that, by patience and comfort of thy holy word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast, the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in thy Son, our SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST.

Now, to GOD the Father, &c.

SERMON XLIII.

PSALM XCV. 6, 7.

O come, let us worship and fall down before him :— For he is the LORD *our* GOD.—

IN this psalm, we find holy David taken up with the pious contemplation of GOD's infinite power, majesty, and greatness :——He considers him as the soveriegn LORD of the whole earth, the maker and supporter of all things ;—that by him the heavens were created, and all the host of them ;—that the earth was wisely fashioned by his hands ;—he had founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods :——That we likewise, the people of his pasture, were raised up by the same creating hand, from nothing, to the dignity of rational creatures,—made, with respect to our reason and understanding, after his own most perfect image.

It was natural to imagine, that such a contemplation would light up a flame of devotion in any grateful man's breast ; and accordingly, we find it break forth, in the words of the text, in a kind of religious rapture !——

O come, let us worship and fall down before him :——For he is the LORD our GOD.

Sure, never exhortation to prayer and worship can be better enforced than upon this principle,—that GOD is the cause and Creator of all things ;—that each individual being is upheld in the station it was first placed, by the same hand which first formed it ;—that all the blessings and advantages, which are necessary to the happiness and welfare of beings on earth,are only to be derived from the same fountain ;—and that the only way to do it, is to secure an interest in his favor, by a grateful expression of our sense for the benefits we have received,and an humble dependence upon him for those we expect and stand in need of.—Whom

have we in heaven, says the psalmist, but thee, O GOD, to look unto, or depend on?—to whom shall we pour out our complaints, and speak of all our wants and necessities, but to thy goodness, which is ever willing to confer upon us whatever becomes us to ask, and thee to grant?—because thou hast promised to be nigh unto all that call upon thee—yea, unto all such as call upon thee faithfully;—that thou wilt fulfil the desire of them that fear thee, that thou wilt also hear their cry, and help them.

Of all duties, prayer certainly is the sweetest and most easy.——There are some duties which may seem to occasion a troublesome opposition to the natural workings of flesh and blood;—such as the forgiveness of injuries, and the love of our enemies:——Others, which will force us unavoidably into a perpetual struggle with our passions,—which war against the soul;——such as, chastity,——temperance,——humility.——There are other virtues, which seem to bid us forget our present interest for a while,——such as charity and generosity;——others that teach us to forget it at all times, and wholly to fix our affections on things above, and in no circumstance to act like men that look for a continuing city here, but upon one to come, whose builder and maker is GOD. But this duty of prayer and thanksgiving to GOD ——has no such oppositions to encounter;—— it takes no bullock out of thy field,——no horse out of thy stable,——nor he-goat out of thy fold;——it costeth no weariness of bones, no untimely watchings;——it requireth no strength of parts, or painful study,—but just to know and have a true sense of our dependance, and of the mercies by which we are upheld:——And, with this, in every place and posture of body, a good man may lift up his soul unto the LORD his GOD.

Indeed, as to the frequency of putting this duty formally in practice, as the precept must ne-

cessarily have varied according to the different stations in which God has placed us;——so he has been pleased to determine nothing precisely concerning it;—for, perhaps, it would be unreasonable to expect, that the day-laborer, or he that supports a numerous family by the sweat of his brow, should spend as much of his time in devotion, as the man of leisure and unbounded wealth.—This, however, in the general, may hold good, that we are bound to pay this tribute to God, as often as his providence has put an opportunity into our hands of so doing;—provided that no plea, drawn from the necessary attention to the affairs of the world, which many men's situations oblige them to, may be supposed to extend to an exemption from paying their morning and evening sacrifice to God.—For it seems to be the least that can be done to answer the demand of our duty in this point—successively to open and shut up the day in prayer and thanksgiving;——since there is not a morning thou risest, or a night thou liest down, but thou art indebted for it to the watchful providence of Almighty God.—David and Daniel, whose names are recorded in scripture for future example:—The first, though a mighty king, embarrassed with wars abroad, and unnatural disturbances at home; a situation, one would think, would allow little time for any thing but his own and his kingdom's safety;—yet found he leisure to pray *seven times* a day:—The latter, the counsellor and first minister of state to the great Nebuchadnezzar; and, though perpetually fatigued with the affairs of a mighty kingdom, and the government of the whole province of Babylon, which was committed to his administration;——though near the person of an idolatrous king, and amidst the temptations of a luxurious court,——yet never neglected he his God; but, as we read,——he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before him.

A frequent correspondence with heaven, by prayer and devotion, is the greatest nourishment and support of spiritual life :—It keeps the sense of a God warm and lively within us,——which secures our disposition, and sets such guards over us, that hardly will a temptation prevail against us. Who can entertain a base or an impure thought, or think of executing it, who is incessantly conversing with his God ?——or not despise every temptation this lower world can offer him, when, by his constant addresses before the throne of God's majesty, he brings the glorious prospect of heaven perpetually before his eyes ?

I cannot help here taking notice of the doctrine of those who would resolve all devotion in the inner man, and think that there is nothing more requisite to express our reverence to God, but purity and integrity of heart,—unaccompanied either with words or actions.—To this opinion, it may be justly answered—That, in the present state we are in, we find such a strong sympathy and union between our souls and bodies, that the one cannot be touched, or sensibly affected, without producing some corresponding emotion in the other.—Nature has assigned a different look, tone of voice, and gesture, peculiar to every passion and affection we are subject to ; and therefore, to argue against this strict correspondence which is held between our souls and bodies,——is disputing against the frame and mechanism of human nature.——We are not angels, but men clothed with bodies, and, in some measure, so governed by our imaginations, that we have need of all these external helps which nature has made the interpreters of our thoughts.—And, no doubt, tho' a virtuous and good life is more acceptable in the sight of God, than either prayer or thanksgiving, —for, behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams ;—nevertheless,

as the one ought to be done, so the other ought not, by any means, be left undone.—As GOD is to be obeyed,—so he is to be worshipped also.—For, altho' inward holiness and integrity of heart is the ultimate end of the divine dispensations;—yet external religion is a certain mean of promoting it.—Each of them has its just bounds:—And therefore, as we would not be so carnal as merely to rest contented with the one,—so neither can we pretend to be so spiritual as to neglect the other.

And tho' GOD is all-wise, and therefore understands our thoughts afar off,—and knows the exact degrees of our love and reverence to him, tho' we should withhold those outward marks of it;—yet GOD himself has been graciously pleased to command us to pray to him;——that we might beg the assistance of his grace to work with us against our infirmities;————that we might acknowledge him to be, what he is, the supreme LORD of the whole world;——that we might testify the sense we have of all his mercies and loving kindness to us,——and confess that he has the propriety of every thing we enjoy;—that the earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof.

Thus much of this duty of prayer in general.——From every individual, it may be reasonably expected from a bare reflection upon his own station, his personal wants, and the daily blessings which he has received in particular;——but, for those blessings bestowed upon the whole species in common,——reason seems farther to require, that a joint return should be made by as many of the species as can conveniently assemble together for this religious purpose.——From hence arises, likewise, the reasonableness of public worship, and sacred places set apart for that purpose; without which, it would be very difficult to preserve that sense of GOD and religion upon the minds of men, which is so necessary to their well-

being, considered only as a civil society, and with regard to the purposes of this life, and the influence which a just sense of it must have upon their actions. Besides, men who are united in societies, can have no other cement to unite them likewise in religious ties, as well as in manners of worship and points of faith, but the institution of solemn times, and public places, destined for that use.

And it is not to be questioned, that if the time, as well as the place, for serving GOD, were once considered as indifferent, and left so far to every man's choice, as to have no calls to public prayer, how ever a sense of religion might be preserved a while by a few speculative men, yet, that the bulk of mankind would lose all knowledge of it, and, in time, live without GOD in the world.—Not that private prayer is the less our duty, the contrary of which is proved above; and our SAVIOUR says, that when we pray to GOD in secret, we shall be rewarded openly;——but that prayers which are publicly offered up in GOD's house, tend more to the glory of GOD, and the benefit of ourselves,—for this reason, that they are presumed to be performed with greater attention and seriousness, and therefore most likely to be heard with a more favorable acceptance. And for this, one might appeal to every man's breast, whether he has not been affected with the most elevated pitch of devotion, when he gave thanks to the great congregation of the saints, and praised GOD amongst much people?——Of this united worship, there is a glorious description which St. John gives us, in the Revelations, where he supposes the whole universe joining together in their several capacities, to give glory in this manner to their common LORD.——Every creature which was in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and such as were in the seas, and all that were in them, heard I, crying,——Blessing, and honor,

and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne.

But here it may be asked, that if public worship tends so much to promote the glory of God, ——and is what is so indispensible the duty and benefit of every christian state,——how came it to pass, that our blessed Saviour left no command to his followers, throughout the gospel, to set up public places of worship, and keep them sacred for that purpose?——It may be answered,——That the necessity of setting apart places for divine worship, and the holiness of them, when thus set apart, seemed already to have been so well established by former revelation, as not to need any express precept upon that subject:——For, though, the particular appointment of the temple, and the confinement of worship to that place alone, were only temporary parts of the Jewish covenant; yet the necessity and duty of having places somewhere solemnly dedicated to God, carried a moral reason with it, and therefore was not abolished with the ceremonial part of the law.——Our Saviour came not to destroy, but to fulfill the law;—— and therefore, the moral precepts of it, which promoted a due regard to the divine Majesty, remained in as full force as ever.——And accordingly, we find it attested, both by christian and heathen writers, that so soon as the second century, when the number of believers was much increased, and the circumstances of rich converts enabled them to do it,——that they began to erect edifices for divine worship;—— and, though under the frowns and oppression of the civil power, they every Sabbath assembled themselves therein, that, with one heart and one lip, they might declare whose they were, and whom they served, and, as the servants of one Lord, might offer up their joint prayers and petitions.

I wish there was no reason to lament an abatement of this religious zeal amongst christians of latter days.—Though the piety of our forefathers seems, in a great measure, to have deprived us of the merit of building churches for the service of God, there can be no such plea for not frequenting them in a regular and solemn manner.—How often do people absent themselves (when in the utmost distress how to dispose of themselves) from church, even upon those days which are set apart for nothing else but the worship of God; —when, to trifle that day away, or apply any portion of it to secular concerns, is a sacrilege almost in the literal sense of the word!

From this duty of public prayer arises another which I cannot help speaking of, it being so dependant upon it;—I mean, a serious, devout, and respectful behavior, when we are performing this solemn duty in the house of God.———This is surely the least that can be necessary in the immediate presence of the Sovereign of the world, upon whose acceptance of our addresses, all our present and future happiness depends.

External behavior is the result of inward reverence, and is therefore part of our duty to God, whom we are to worship in body as well as spirit.

And as no one should be wanting in outward respect and decorum; before an earthly prince or superior, much less should we be so, before Him, whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain.

Notwithstanding the obviousness of this branch of duty,—it seems often to be little understood; and whoever will take a general survey of church behavior, will often meet with scenes of sad variety.—What a vein of indolence and indevotion sometimes seems to run throughout whole congregations!—what ill-timed pains do some take in putting on an air of gaiety and indifference, in the most interesting parts of this duty,—even

when they are making confession of their sins, as if they were ashamed to be thought serious with their GOD!—Surely, to address ourselves to his infinite Majesty, after a negligent and dispassionate manner, besides the immediate indignity offered, it is a sad sign we little consider the blessings we ask for; and far less deserve them. Besides, what is a prayer, unless our hearts and affections go along with it?—It is not so much as the shadow of devotion; and little better than the papists telling their beads,—or honoring GOD with their lips, when their hearts are far from him. The consideration that a person is come to prostrate himself before the throne of high heaven, and in that place which is particularly distinguished by his presence, is sufficient inducement for any one to watch over his imagination, and guard against the least appearance of levity and disrespect.

An inward sincerity will of course influence the outward deportment; but where the one is wanting, there is great reason to suspect the absence of the other. I own it is possible, and often happens, that this external garb of religion may be worn, when there is little within of a piece with it;—but I believe the converse of the proposition can never happen to be true, that a truly religious frame of mind should exist without some outward mark of it. The mind will shine thro' the veil of flesh which covers it, and naturally express its religious dispositions; and, if it possesses the power of godliness,—will have the external form of it too.

May GOD grant us to be defective in neither, but that we may so praise and magnify GOD on earth,—that when he cometh, at the last day, with ten thousand of his saints in heaven, to judge the world, we may be partakers of their eternal inheritance. *Amen.*

SERMON XLIV.

The Ways of Providence justified to Man.

PSALM lxxxiii. 12, 13.

Behold, these are the ungodly who prosper in the world, they increase in riches.
Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency.

THIS complaint of the Psalmist, concerning the promiscuous distribution of GOD's blessings to the just and the unjust,——that the sun should shine without distinction upon the good and the bad,—and rains descend upon the righteous and unrighteous man,—is a subject that has afforded much matter for inquiry, and at one time or other has raised doubts to dishearten and perplex the minds of men. If the sovereign LORD of all the earth does look on, whence so much disorder in the face of things!—why is it permitted, that wise and good men should be left often a prey to so many miseries and distresses of life,—whilst the guilty and foolish triumph in their offences, and even the tabernacles of robbers prosper?

To this it is answered,—That therefore there is a future state of rewards and punishments to take place after this life,—wherein all these inequalities shall be made even, when the circumstances of every man's case shall be considered, and where GOD shall be justified in all his ways, and every mouth shall be stopt.

If this was not so,——if the ungodly were to prosper in the world, and have riches in possession,—and no distinction to be made hereafter, to what purpose would it have been to have maintained our integrity?—Lo! then, indeed, should I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency.

It is farther said, and what is a more direct answer to the point,—that when God created man, that he might make him capable of receiving happiness at his hands hereafter,——he endowed him with liberty and freedom of choice, without which, he could not have been a creature accountable for his actions ;—that it is merely from the bad use he makes of these gifts,——that all those instances of irregularity do result, upon which the complaint is here grounded,—which could nowise be prevented, but by the total subversion of human liberty,—that should God make bare his arm, and interpose on every injustice that is committed,——mankind might be said to do what was right,—but, at the same time, to lose the merit of it, since they would act under force and necessity, and not from the determinations of their own mind ;—that, upon this supposition,—a man could with no more reason expect to go to heaven for acts of temperance, justice and humanity, than for the ordinary impulses of hunger and thirst, which nature directed ;—that God has dealt with man upon better terms ;—he has first endowed him with liberty and free-will ;—he has set life and death, good and evil, before him ;—that he has given him faculties to find out what will be the consequences of either way of acting, and then left him to take which course his reason and direction shall point out.

I shall desist from enlarging any farther upon either of the foregoing arguments in vindication of God's providence, which are urged so often with so much force and conviction, as to leave no room for a reasonable reply ;—since the miseries which befal the good, and the seeming happiness of the wicked, could not be otherwise in such a free state and condition as this in which we are placed.

In all charges of this kind, we generally take two things for granted ;—1st, That in the instan-

ces we give, we know certainly the good from the bad ;—and, 2dly, The respective state of their enjoyments or sufferings.

I shall, therefore, in the remaining part of my discourse, take up your time with a short inquiry into the difficulties of coming, not only at the true characters of men,—but likewise of knowing the degrees either of their real happiness or misery in this life.

The first of these will teach us candor in our judgments of others ;—the second, to which I shall confine myself, will teach us humility in our reasonings upon the ways of God.

For though the miseries of the good, and the prosperity of the wicked, are not in general to be denied ;—yet I shall endeavor to show, that the particular instances we are apt to produce, when we cry out in the words of the Psalmist, Lo ! these are the ungodly,—these prosper and are happy in the world ;——I say, I shall endeavor to show, that we are so ignorant of the articles of the charge,—and the evidence we go upon to make them good, is so lame and defective,—as to be sufficient by itself to check all propensity to expostulate with God's providence, allowing there was no other way of clearing up the matter reconcileably to his attributes.

And, first, what certain and infallible marks have we of the goodness or badness of the bulk of mankind ?

If we trust to fame and reports,—if they are good, how do we know but they may proceed from partial friendship or flattery ?—when bad, from envy or malice, from ill-natured surmises and constructions of things ?—and, on both sides from small matters aggrandized thro' mistake,—and sometimes thro' the unskilful relation of even truth itself ?—from some, or all of which causes, it happens, that the characters of men, like the

histories of the Egyptians, are to be received and read with caution;—they are generally dressed out and disfigured with so many dreams and fables, that every ordinary reader shall not be able to distinguish truth from falshood.—But allowing these reflections to be too severe in this matter,—that no such thing as envy ever lessened a man's character, or malice blackened it;—yet, the characters of men are not easily penetrated, as they depend often upon the retired, unseen parts of a man's life.—The best and truest piety is most secret; and the worst of actions, for different reasons, will be so too.—Some men are modest, and seem to take pains to hide their virtues; and, from a natural distance and reserve in their tempers, scarce suffer their good qualities to be known:——Others, on the contrary, put in practice a thousand little arts to counterfeit virtue which they have not,——the better to conceal those vices which they really have;—and this under fair shows of sanctity, good-nature, generosity, or some virtue or other,—too specious to be seen through—too amiable and disinterested to be suspected. These hints may be sufficient to show how hard it is to come at the matter of fact:—But one may go a step farther,—and say, that, even that, in many cases, could we come to the knowledge of it, is not sufficient by itself to pronounce a man either good or bad. There are numbers of circumstances, which attend every action of a man's life, which can never come to the knowledge of the world,—yet ought to be known, and well weighed, before sentence with any justice can be passed upon him.—A man may have different views, and a different sense of things from what his judges have; and what he understands and feels, and what passes within him, may be a secret treasured up deeply there for ever.—A man, through bodily infirmity, or some complex-

ional defect, which perhaps is not in his power to correct,—may be subject to inadvertencies,—to starts——and unhappy turns of temper; he may lie open to snares he is not always aware of; or, through ignorance and want of information and proper helps, he may labor in the dark;—In all which cases, he may do many things which are wrong in themselves, and yet be innocent;——at least an object rather to be pitied, then censured with severity and ill-will. These are difficulties which stand in every one's way, in the forming a judgment of the characters of others. But, for once, let us suppose them all to be got over, so that we could see the bottom of every man's heart;——let us allow that the word rogue, or honest man, was wrote so legibly in every man's face, that no one could possibly mistake it;—yet still the happiness of both the one and the other, which is the only fact that can bring the charge home, is what we have so little certain knowledge of,——that, bating some flagrant instances,——whenever we venture to pronounce upon it, our decisions are little more than random guesses,—For who can search the heart of man?—it is treacherous, even to ourselves, and much more likely to impose upon others. Even in laughter(if you will believe Solomon) the heart is sorrowful;——*the mind sits drooping, whilst the countenance is gay;*——and even he, who is the object of envy to those who look no farther than the surface of his estate,—may appear at the same time worthy of compassion to those who know his private recesses. Besides this, a man's unhappiness is not to be ascertained so much from what is known to have befallen him,—as from his particular turn and cast of mind, and capacity of bearing it.—Poverty, exile, loss of fame or friends, the death of children, the dearest of all pledges of a man's happiness, make not equal impressions upon every

temper. You will see one man undergo, with scarce the expense of a sigh,—what another, in the bitterness of his soul, would go mourning for all his life long:—Nay, a hasty word, or an unkind look, to a soft and tender nature, will strike deeper than a sword to the hardened and senseless.—If these reflections hold true with regard to misfortunes,——they are the same with regard to enjoyments: We are formed differently;—have different tastes and perceptions of things;——by the force of habit, education, or a particular cast of mind,——it happens, that neither the use or possession of the same enjoyments and advantages, produce the same happiness and contentment;——but that it differs in every man almost according to his temper and complexion;——so that the self-same happy accidents in life, which shall give raptures to the choleric or sanguine man, shall be received with indifference by the cold and phlegmatic;—and so oddly perplexed are the accounts of both human happiness and misery in this world,—that trifles, light as air, shall be able to make the hearts of some men sing for joy; at the same time that others, with real blessings and advantages, without the power of using them, have their hearts heavy and discontented.

Alas! if the principles of contentment are not within us,—the height of station and worldly grandeur, will as soon add a cubit to a man's stature, as to his happiness.

This will suggest to us how little away we have gone towards the proof of any man's happines,—in barely saying,—Lo! this man prospers in the world,—and this man has riches in possession.

When a man has got much above us, we take it for granted—that he sees some glorious prospects, and feels some mighty pleasures from his height;—whereas, could we get up to him—it is great odds whether we should find any thing to

make us tolerable amends for the pains and trouble of climbing up so high.—Nothing, perhaps, but more dangers and more troubles still;—and such a giddiness of head besides, as to make a wise man wish he was well down again upon the level. To calculate, therefore, the happiness of mankind by their stations and honors, is the most deceitful of all rules.——Great, no doubt, is the happiness which a moderate fortune, and moderate desires, with a consciousness of virtue, will secure a man. Many are the silent pleasures of the honest peasant, who rises cheerfully to his labor.—Look into his dwelling,—where the scene of every man's happiness chiefly lies;—he has the same domestic endearments,——as much joy and comfort in his children,—and as flattering hopes of their doing well,—to enliven his hours, and glad his heart, as you could conceive in the most affluent station:—And I make no doubt, in general, but if the true account of his joys and sufferings were to be balanced with those of his betters——that the upshot would prove to be little more than this,—that the rich man had the more meat,——but the poor man the better stomach;——the one had more luxury,—more able physicians to attend and set him to rights;—the other more health and soundness in his bones, and less occasion for their help;—that, after these two articles betwixt them were balanced,——in all other things they stood upon a level;——that the sun shines as warm,—the air blows as fresh, and the earth breathes as fragrant, upon the one as the other; and that they have an equal share in all the beauties and real benefits of nature.—These hints may be sufficient to show, what I proposed from them, ——the difficulties which attend us in judging truly either of the happiness or the misery of the bulk of mankind,—the evidence being still more defective in this case (as the matter of fact is hard

to come at)——than even in that of judging of the true characters; of both which, in general, we have such imperfect knowledge, as will teach us candor in our determinations upon each other.

But the main purport of this discourse, is, to teach us humility in our reasonings upon the ways of the Almighty.

That things are dealt unequally in this world, is one of the strongest natural arguments for a future state,——and therefore is not to be overthrown: Nevertheless, I am pursuaded the charge is far from being as great as at first sight it may appear;——or if it is—that our views of things are so narrow and confined, that it is not in our power to make it good.

But suppose it otherwise,—that the happiness and prosperity of bad men were as great as our general complaints make them,—and, what is not the case—that we were not able to clear up the matter, or answer it reconcileably with GOD's justice and providence;—what shall we infer?—Why, the most becoming conclusion is,—that it is one instance more, out of many others, of our ignorance.—Why should this, or any other religious difficulty he cannot comprehend,——why should it alarm him more than ten thousand other difficulties, which every day elude his most exact and attentive search?—Does not the meanest flower in the field, or the smallest blade of grass, baffle the understanding of the most penetrating mind?—Can the deepest inquirers after nature tell us, upon what particular size and motion of parts, the various colors and tastes of vegetables depend;—why one shrub is laxative,—another restringent;—why arsenic and hellebore should lay waste this noble frame of ours, or opium lock up all the inroads to our senses,—and plunder us, in so merciless a manner, of reason and understanding?—Nay, have not the most ob-

vious things that come in our way, dark sides, which the quickest sight cannot penetrate into? and do not the clearest and most exalted understandings find themselves puzzled, and at a loss in every particle of matter?

Go then,—proud man!——and when thy head turns giddy with opinions of thy own wisdom, that thou wouldst correct the measures of the Almighty,—go then,—take a full view of thyself in this glass:——Consider thy own faculties,—how narrow and imperfect;—how much they are chequered with truth and falshood;—how little arrives at thy knowledge, and how darkly and confusedly thou discernest even that little, as in a glass: —Consider the beginnings and endings of things, the greatest and the smallest, how they all conspire to baffle thee;—and, which way ever thou prosecutest thy inquiries,——what fresh subjects of amazement,—and what fresh reasons to believe there are more yet behind, which thou canst never comprehend.—Consider,—these are but a part of his ways,—How little a portion is heard of him! Canst thou, by searching, find out God?—wouldst thou know the Almighty to perfection?—It is as high as heaven, what canst thou do?—It is deeper than hell, how canst thou know it?

Could we but see the mysterious workings of providence, and were we able to comprehend the whole plan of his infinite wisdom and goodness, which possibly may be the case in the final consummation of all things;—those events, which we are now so perplexed to account for, would probably exalt and magnify his wisdom, and make us cry out with the apostle, in that rapturous exclamation,—O! the depth of the riches both of the goodness and wisdom of God!—how unsearchable are his ways, and his paths past finding out!

Now to God, &c.

SERMON XLV.

The Ingratitude of Israel.

2 KINGS xvii. 7.

For so it was,——that the children of Israel had sinned against the LORD *their* GOD, *who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt.*

THE words of the text account for the cause of a sad calamity, which is related, in the foregoing verses, to have befallen a great number of Israelites, who were surprised in the capital city of Samaria, by Hosea king of Assyria, and cruelly carried away by him out of their own country, and placed on the desolate frontiers of Halah, and in Haber by the river Gozan, and in the city of the Medes, and there confined to end their days in sorrow and captivity.——Upon which the sacred historian, instead of accounting for so sad an event merely from political springs and causes,—such, for instance, as the superior strength and policy of the enemy,—or an unseasonable provocation given,—or that proper measures of defence were neglected;——he traces it up, in one word, to its true cause:——For so it was, says he, that the children of Israel had sinned against the LORD their GOD, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt.—It was surely a sufficient foundation to dread some evil,——that they had sinned against that Being who had an unquestionable right to their obedience.—But, what an aggravation was it, that they had not only sinned simply against the truth, but against the GOD of mercies,——who had brought them forth out of the land of Egypt;——who not only created, upheld, and favored them with so many advantages in common with the rest of their fellow creatures,—but who had been particularly kind to them in their misfortunes;—who, when

they were in the house of bondage, in the most hopeless condition, without a prospect of any natural means of redress, had compassionately heard their cry, and took pity upon the afflictions of a distressed people,——and, by a chain of miracles, delivered them from servitude and oppression;—miracles of so stupendous a nature, that I take delight to offer them, as often as I have an opportunity, to your devoutest contemplations!——This you would think as high and as complicated an aggravation of their sins as could be urged.——This was not all;—for, besides GOD's goodness, in first favoring their miraculous escape, a series of successes not to be accounted for from second causes, and the natural course of events, had crowned their heads in so remarkable a manner, as to afford an evident proof, not only of his general concern for their welfare, but of his particular providence and attachment to them above all people upon earth.——In the wilderness he led them like sheep, and kept them as the apple of his eye:——He suffered no man to do them wrong, but reproved even kings for their sake,——When they entered into the promised land,—no force was able to stand before them;——when in possession of it,—no army was able to drive them out;—and, in a word, nature, for a time, was driven backwards to serve them; and even the sun itself had stood still in the midst of heaven to secure their victories.

A people with so many testimonies of GOD's favor, who had not profited thereby so as to become a virtuous people, must have been utterly corrupt;——and so they were.—And it is likely, from the many specimens they had given, in Moses's time, of a disposition to forget GOD's benefits, and, upon every trial, to rebel against him,—he foresaw they would certainly prove a thankless and unthinking people, extremely inclined to go

astray and do evil ;——and therefore, if any thing was likely to bring them back to themselves, and to consider the evils of their misdoings,—it must be the dread of some temporal calamity, which he prophetically threatened, would one day or other befal them :——Hoping, no doubt,—that if no principle of gratitude could make them an obedient people,—at least they might be wrought upon by the terror of being reduced back again by the same all-powerful hand to their first distressed condition ;—which, in the end, did actually overtake them.—For, at length, when neither the alternatives of promises or threatenings,—when neither rewards or corrections—comforts or afflictions, could soften them ; when continual instructions,—warnings,—invitations,—reproofs,—miracles,—prophets and holy guides, had no effect, but, instead of making them grow better, apparently made them grow worse,—God's patience at length withdrew,—and he suffered them to reap the wages of their folly, by letting them fall into the state of bondage from whence he had first raised them ;——and that not only in that partial instance of those in Samaria, who were taken by Hosea,——but, I mean, in that more general instance of their overthrow by the army of the Chaldeans—wherein he suffered the whole nation to be led away, and carried captive into Nineveh and Babylon.—We may be assured, that the history of God Almighty's just dealings with this froward and thoughtless people,—was not wrote for nothing ; but that it was given as a loud call and warning of obedience and gratitude, for all races of men to whom the light of revelation should hereafter reach :——And therefore, I have made choice of this subject ; as it seems likely to furnish some reflections seasonable for the beginning of this week, which should be devoted to such meditations as may prepare and fit us for

the solemn fast which we are shortly to observe, and whose pious intention will not be answered by a bare assembling ourselves together, without making some religious and national remarks suitable to the occasion.—Doubtless, there is no nation which ever had so many extraordinary reasons and supernatural motives to become thankful and virtuous, as the Jews had;——which besides the daily blessings of GOD's providence to them, has not received sufficient blessings and mercies at the hands of GOD so as to engage their best services, and the warmest returns of gratitude they can pay.

There has been a time, may be, when they have been delivered from some grievous calamity—from the rage of pestilence or famine,—from the edge and fury of the sword,——from the fate and fall of kingdoms round them:——They may have been preserved by providential discoveries of plots and designs against the well being of their states, or by critical turns and revolutions in their favor, when beginning to sink.——By some signal interposition of GOD's providence, they may have rescued their liberties, and all that was dear to them, from the jaws of some tyrant;—or may have preserved their religion pure and uncorrupted, when all other comforts failed them.—If other countries have reason to be thankful to GOD for any one of these mercies,——much more has this of ours,—which, at one time or other, has received them all;—insomuch, that our history, for this last hundred years, has scarce been any thing but the history of our deliverances and God's blessings;—and these in so complicated a chain, such as were scarce ever vouchsafed to any people besides, except the Jews;—and with regard to them, tho' inferior in the stupendous manner of their working,—yet no way so—in the extensive goodness of their effects, and the infinite be-

nevolence and power which must have wrought them for us.

Here then let us stop to look back a moment, and inquire what great effects all this has had upon our sins, and how far worthy we have lived of what we have received.

A stranger when he heard that this island had been so favored by heaven,—so happy in our laws and religion,—so flourishing in our trade,—and so blessed in our situation,—and so visibly protected in all of them by Providence,—would conclude, that our morals had kept pace with these blessings, and would expect, that as we were the most favored by God Almighty, we must be the most virtuous and religious people upon earth.—

Would to God, there was any other reason to incline one to such a belief!—would to God, that the appearance of religion was more frequent! for that would necessarily imply the reality of it somewhere, and most probably in the greatest and most respectable characters of the nation.—Such was the situation of this country, till a licentious king introduced a licentious age.—The court of Charles the second first broke in upon, and, I fear, has almost demolished the outworks of religion, of modesty and of sober manners;——so that, instead of any real marks of religion amongst us, you see thousands who are tired with carrying the mask of it,—and have thrown it aside as a useless incumberance.

But this licentiousness, he will say, may be chiefly owing to a long course of prosperity, which is apt to corrupt men's minds. God has since tried you with afflictions;—you have had lately a bloody and expensive war;—God has sent moreover, a pestilence among your cattle, which has cut off the flock from the fold, and left no herd in the stalls; besides, you have just felt two dreadful shocks in your metropolis, of a most

terrifying nature;—which, if GOD's providence had not checked and restrained within some bounds, might have overthrown your capital, and your kingdom with it.

Surely he will say, all these warnings must have awakened the consciences of the most unthinking part of you, and forced the inhabitants of your land, from such admonitions, to have learned righteousness. I own, this is the natural effect, and, one would hope, should always be the improvement from such calamities; for we often find, that numbers of people, who, in their prosperity, seemed to forget GOD,—do yet remember him in the days of trouble and distress:——Yet consider this nationally,—we see no such effect from it, as, in fact one would expect from speculation.

For instance, with all the devastation and bloodshed which the war has occasioned, how many converts has it made either to virtue or frugality? The pestilence amongst our cattle, though it has distressed, and utterly undone so many thousands, yet what one visible alteration has it made in the course of our lives?

And tho' one would imagine, that the necessary drains of taxes for the one, and the loss of rent and property from the other,—should, in some measure, have withdrawn the means of gratifying our passions as we have done;—yet, what appearance is there amongst us that it is so?—— what one fashionable folly or extravagance has been checked?—Are not the same expenses of equipage, and furniture, and dress,—the same order of diversions, perpetually returning, and as great luxury and epicurism of entertainments, as in the most prosperous condition?—So that though the head is sick, and the whole heart is faint, we all affect to look well in the face, either as if nothing had happened, or we were ashamed to acknow-

ledge the force and natural effects of the chastisements of God. And if, from the effects which war and pestilence have had, we may form a judgment of the moral effects which this last terror is likely to produce,—it is to be feared, however we might be startled at first,—that the impressions will scarce last longer than the instantaneous shock which occasioned them.—And, I make no doubt,—should a man have courage to declare his opinion,—"That he believed it was an indication of God's anger upon a corrupt generation,"—that it would be great odds, but he would be pitied for his weakness, or openly laughed at for his superstition. Or if, after such a declaration,—he was thought worth setting right in his mistake,—he would be informed,—that religion had nothing to do in explications of this kind;—that all such violent vibrations of the earth were owing to subterraneous caverns falling down of themselves, or being blown up by nitrous and sulphureous vapors, rarefied by heat;—and that it was idle to bring in the Deity to untie the knot, when it can be resolved easily into natural causes.——Vain, unthinking mortals!—As if natural causes were any thing else in the hands of God,—but instruments, which he can turn to work the purposes of his will, either to reward or punish, as seems fitting to his infinite wisdom.

Thus, no man repenteth him of his wickedness, saying,—What have I done?——but every one turneth to his course, as a horse rusheth into the battle.—To conclude—However we may underrate it now,—it is a maxim of eternal truth,—which both reasonings and all accounts from history confirm,—That the wickedness and corruption of a people will sooner or later bring on temporal mischiefs and calamities.——And can it be otherwise?—for a vicious nation not only carries the seeds of destruction within, from the natural

workings and course of things,—but it lays itself open to the whole force and injury of accidents from without;—and I do venture to say,—there never was a nation or people fallen into troubles or decay,—but one might justly leave the same remark upon them, which the sacred historian makes in the text, upon the misfortunes of the Israelites;——for so it was,—that they had sinned against the LORD their GOD.

Let us, therefore, constantly bear in mind, that conclusion of the sacred writer,—which I shall give you in his own beautiful and awful language:—"But the LORD, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt, with great power and a stretched-out arm, him shall ye fear and him shall ye worship, and to him shall ye do sacrifice:—And the statutes, and the ordinances, and the commandments he wrote for you, ye shall observe to do for evermore. The LORD your GOD ye shall fear,—and he shall deliver you out of the hand of all your enemies."

Now, to GOD the Father, &c.

END OF VOLUME THIRD.

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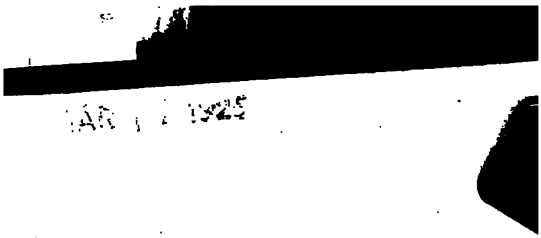
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